NEW STATESMAN

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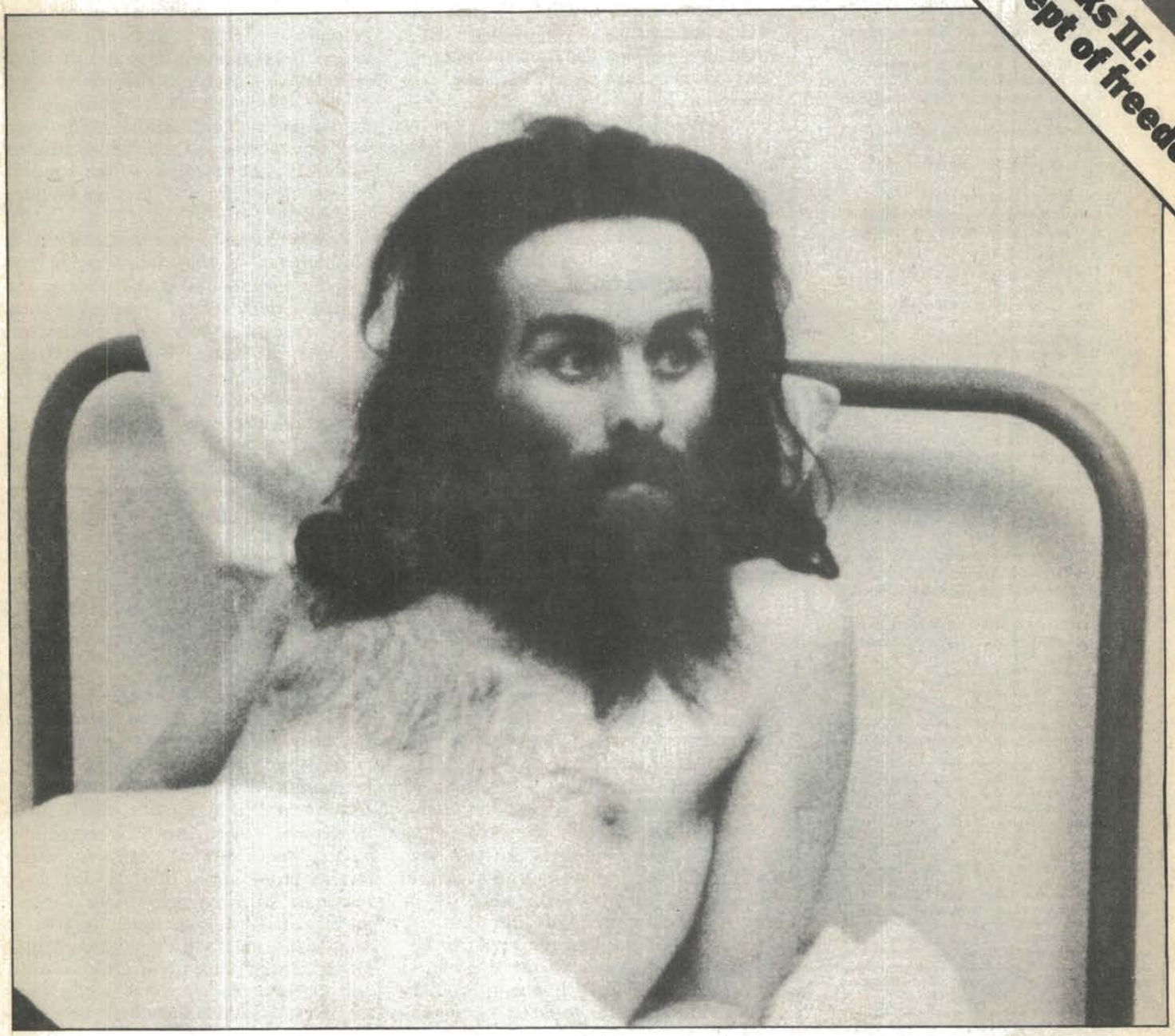
Lead pollution: the danger that stalks London's playgrounds

Christmas books II: Paul Johnson's concept of freedom



H BLOCK

Mary Holland reports on the Irish hunger strikers

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The dark at the end of the tunnel

ON PAGE EIGHT today we publish Mary Holland's harrowing account of the predicament facing British policy in Ireland. When there is little pleasant reading to be found, people may be tempted to avert their eyes from this problem. But it is not a moment when we can afford to do so. A government which could claim — whatever its economic sins — to have found a settlement of sorts in Zimbabwe is now in danger of causing an Irish debacle worse than anything that has occurred since the early years of the century. It's been sensibly observed that the Irish issue — whatever may be achieved elsewhere — is the one which seeks out, repeatedly, the flaws in any British political organism.

The first point to register is that the army, or some part of it, is now holding out the prospect of military victory over a nearly exhausted IRA. Mrs Thatcher's beleagued cabinet would need to be more than human if they were not tempted to think: in that case, surely all is well? But contemporary history is strewn with the wreckage of military promises. Our generals, said the *New Yorker,* commenting on America's Vietnam policy, told us there was light at the end of the tunnel. They were right about the tunnel: wrong about the light.

Rebels, of course, *have* been wiped out by military force. Tito destroyed the Cetniks; the German resistance was destroyed by Hitler; long ago the Cathars were destroyed so thoroughly that today we hardly know what was the doctrine which the Church found so offensive. The list given is a mixed one: deliberately so, in order to focus attention on the fact that the resilience of an insurgence movement does not necessarily turn upon whether or not it is one which meets our own ideological preferences. Experience suggests, however, that rebels who possess formidable emotional support cannot be wholly extinguished unless conditions exist — however briefly — in which the central government can direct the whole of its force, without restraint, against them.

That condition does not apply in Ireland: one would like to say that this is because the people of England, Scotland and Wales will not tolerate the unrestrained use of military force against any part of the population of the British Isles. And one would probably be right. But in any case, there is the independent government of Ireland to consider: apart from which, as long as Britain adheres, however loosely, to the West European alliance, there are limits and restraints upon Westminster's capacity to deploy military force.

MILITARY VICTORY has been held out as a prospect before, and found delusory. But the real question of Irish policy is why political victory, which was never so hard to gain, has been incapable of achievement. One should not be too readily taken in by alibis about hundreds of years of religious bigotry, and the like. The truth is that the Irish difficulties that we have faced since the sixties owe more to the incompetence of our own state than to the ineluctable forces of history: more to the sins of particular people and the failings of particular institutions than they do to the presence of original sin in human nature at large. This is an important, and sobering, reflection for a people who have always prided themselves upon their political skill: our achievement in Ulster has been to turn what was a minor and manageable problem —initially, not much more than a matter of municipal reform — into an incipient civil war.

Perhaps people forget this, and it is to the interest of the politicians and civil servants that they should do so. To recap: Ireland, especially Ulster, benefited to some extent from the boom years which came just after the Second World War. By the mid-sixties, Ulster had acquired, for the first time, a Catholic middle-class of some prosperity and civic ambition. At the same time the IRA, and not by co-incidence, had lost practically all of its military capacity: its spokesmen, indeed, were unable to pretend otherwise. Understandably enough, the rise of this Catholic bourgeoisie was resented and feared by the Protestant hierarchs of Ulster: not men equipped to perceive that the foundation of a civil state's legitimacy are the concessions it makes *before* the collapse of rule.

WHEN, INEVITABLY, the Ulstermen lost control in 1969, no intelligent person can have been surprised. But what was remarkable was the wholly un-political response of Westminster — then nominally controlled by Labour, and manned by persons assumed to be more sophisticated than Stormont's squires. Despite fervent protestations of their own, they sent in the British Army *without* suspending the failed Protestant state: they sent the army to the support of a civil power that no longer existed. From that error, directly and unavoidably, grew the predicament that now faces Mrs Thatcher: the British Army is locked into one side of a war which it might now be foolish to described as 'potential' or 'incipient'.

The state, said Lenin, is the monopoly of violence: a harsh saying, but a true one. From that revolutionary's dictum can follow a democratic politician's rule of action, which is that you must never lend your military force to the support of a regime that has no legitimacy of its own. Perhaps it is not yet too late for British policy to take another direction: but however brilliant the tactics of such an attempt, they will make no impression until the initial error is acknowledged.

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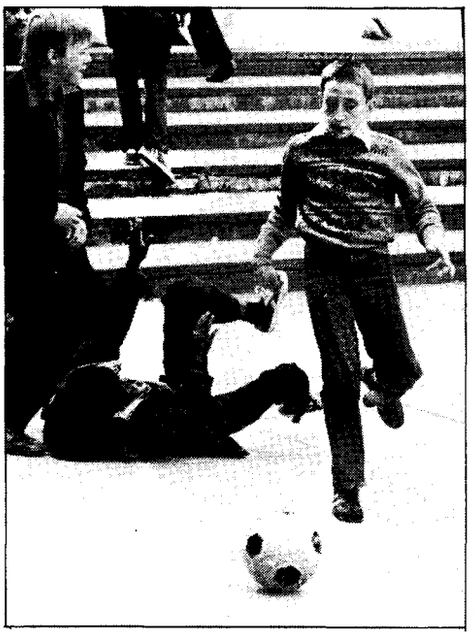
Rick Rogers discloses a threat to children

Lead pollution: the danger that stalks London's playgrounds



Richard and Sally Greenhill

A CONFIDENTIAL SURVEY of 28 inner London school playgrounds has revealed an average level of lead in dust four times higher than that recommended as safe by EEC and American environmental protection agencies. These agencies have a safety limit of 500 parts of lead to a million parts of dust (ppm). The average for London's playground is 2,000ppm, with a few as high as 20,000ppm.

Yet, astonishingly, the Greater London Council — which carried out the playground survey — is on the point of adopting a 'safety level' for lead in street dust of 5,000ppm, below which it will not act to reduce areas of lead pollution.

The GLC criteria for assessing contaminated development land lists a lead level of between 1,000 and 2,000ppm as 'contaminated' and between 2,000 and 10,000ppm as 'heavily contaminated'. On that basis, most of inner London's playgrounds are contaminated areas.

Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of lead pollution at low levels because of the immaturity of their brains and nervous systems, and because they absorb lead easily and quickly. A key effect can be a reduced IQ — one study by Professor Michael Rutter has put the potential loss at up to five per cent, enough to more than double the number of mentally retarded children in Britain. Other effects include hyperactivity, an inability to concentrate, learning difficulties, psychological and behavioural disturbance. Pre-school children and pregnant women are especially at risk.

Three years ago, two members of the GLC's environmental sciences group declared that 'the hazard from lead in dust has been relatively neglected . . . in recent years'. In a study on the risk from lead in street dust, they note that to keep within the maximum permissible daily intake of lead in ingested dust, the concentration of lead in street dust should not exceed 300ppm.

THE GLC ADMITS that 5,000ppm is 'clearly not satisfactory in the long term'. But officials claim it is pointless to adopt a lower level for action since 'the main source of lead in street dust is from lead in petrol'. And that — so far as the GLC and ILEA are concerned — is the business of central government. The GLC argues that 'at least when the level goes over 5,000ppm at any place we will know it must be due to something other than motor exhausts'. Concentration of lead in dust of 1,000 to 2,000ppm is considered typical for the pavements of inner London streets and it is not unusual to find values up to 3,000 or 4,000ppm on the pavements of *busy* streets.

In effect, the GLC is fixing a limit so high that it will rarely have to take any action to reduce pollution. Earlier this year, a primary school in Greenwich registered a lead level of 1,180ppm inside the playground and 2,320ppm outside on the kerb. Action *was* taken to eliminate the alleged cause of the high playground reading — a shed with flaking leaded paint. Ironically, in the Abbey Wood area of London levels of 20,000ppm were recorded — due partly to the existence of a chloride metal (lead smelting) factory in the area. In 1978, children at the Boxgrove primary school were suffering from nausea, stomach pains and headaches. Earlier government surveys of children at the school in 1972 and 1977 revealed 'no abnormal blood lead levels' in the children. But by July 1978, the Boxgrove head was calling for a public inquiry because of 'an alarmingly high lead pollution level at the school'. Officials are still discussing what is to be done.

A Harwell study of the Notting Hill area recorded levels of 4,000ppm with a mean of 2,500ppm. However, GLC scientists say that the level of 10,000ppm are common in most city street gutters.

ABOUT 1,000 tons of lead 'fall' on London every year — one tenth of the total figure for the UK. This makes London one of the most lead-polluted cities in the world. A recent survey of pigeons in Chelsea found they were 'saturated with lead' mainly because they foraged for food along the city streets. In a similar way, children pick up lead particles from the dust — licking dirty or sticky fingers — eating sweets dropped on the ground.

CALIP — the Campaign Against Lead in Petrol — maintains that it is not enough to concentrate on playgrounds or in supposed lead 'hot-spots' such as busy mainroads, smelting works or scrap metal yards. Lead particles travel long distances and levels are affected by surrounding buildings, wind direction and weather conditions.

The DHSS study on *Lead and Health* (the Lawther report) published last March maintained that 'there is no convincing evidence of deleterious effects at blood lead concentrations' below about 35 micrograms per 100 millilitres of blood (35ug/100 ml) — that is, a child's total body burden of lead. But this ignores the mounting evidence here and abroad of the effects of much lower levels. In America, the safety level has been regularly revised downwards — and now stands at 15ug/100ml. Dr Robert Stephens has reckoned, following a 1978 DoE study, that in central Birmingham some 20 per cent of children under 13 have a lead-induced disturbance of the nervous system — due to a body burden of lead below the Lawther 'safety level'.

IT IS NOT SURPRISING that one of the major sources of pollution in Britain is from the lead added to petrol to improve performance. (This accounts for up to 90 per cent of the lead in the air, and consequently of the lead in dust.) Britain has one of the highest permitted levels for lead in petrol — 0.45 grams of lead per litre of petrol (g/l), due to be reduced in 1981 to 0.40g/l. West Germany has a limit of 0.15g/l while lead-free petrol is readily available in the

Duncan Campbell wins civil liberty award

THIS YEAR'S Cobden Award — for the piece of writing judged to have done most for civil liberty — has been given to Duncan Campbell of the *New Statesman*. Announcing the award, Malcolm Hurwitt, secretary of the Trust, cited Mr Campbell's 'major piece of investigative journalism' which exposed the government's telephone-tapping operations. He said: 'Duncan Campbell's revelations highlight the lack of accountability of the security services and the consequences of allowing these secret figures to define their own vision of what 'national security' consists of.' The award will be made at the Cobden Trust Human Rights Day Lecture on 10 December. It would be too mild to say that the rest of the *New Statesman* staff would like to congratulate Duncan Campbell on his Award: we've known for some time that we are working alongside one of the major talents in the business. It gets a little embarrassing to write laudatory mini-profiles of one of our own, so perhaps we can cite the *Observer's* useful compact account on 12 October:

> Together (Campbell's articles this year) . . . constitute the most important body of knowledge about the secret activities and plans of a government to have been published since the post-Watergate disclosures in America . . .
> Campbell, 27, combines the good investigative reporter's fanatical appetitie for detail with the scientific training that enables him to recognise the significance of what he discovers.
> After attending Dundee High School and Brasenose College, Oxford, where he got a first in physics, he began contributing stories about electronics to specialist journals.
> In February 1977 he was arrested with another journalist, Crispin Aubrey, after interviewing a former Signals Corps intelligence analyst, and charged under Section 1 of the Official Secrets Act. The charges under this section were later dropped, and he was found guilty of lesser offences under Section 2. (He was given a discharge on these matters, which became absolute this year.)

The sponsors of the Cobden Trust are: Lord Allen of Fallowfield, Lord Beaumont of Whitley, Anthony Blond, Professor Michael Dummett, Martin Ennals, Lord Hutchinson QC, Lady Sainsbury, Jerome Shestack, Lord Soper, Professor Peter Wallington, Lord Wedderburn of Charlton, and Michael White.

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USA, Japan and Sweden.

New South Wales plans to introduce lead-free petrol by 1984 and there is now strong backing for an all-Australia ban on leaded petrol from the governmental Australian Environment Council.

The British government tends to favour the idea of a lead filter in car exhausts. The oil companies regard it as the least costly option and are already working on examples. But American and Australian environmental agencies have found filters to be unsatisfactory. There is the problem of disposal, and they are also inefficient, letting through the dangerous small particals of lead.

Next Monday, a conference is being held by the Institution of Civil Engineers on the reduction of lead in the atmosphere and the cost of eliminating lead from petrol. It is based on a report by the Fellowship of Engineers commissioned alongside the discredited Lawther report. The Engineers' report favours lead filters and the conference is aimed at persuading ministers and MPs to adopt this 'solution' rather than to reduce the level of lead in petrol any further or opt for lead-free fuel.

Patrick Wintour reveals an attempt to gag civil servants

Keeping quiet in Whitehall

THE DEPARTMENT of Employment is undertaking a campaign to prevent civil servants from making public statements about the effect of cuts in the department. At least nine members of the Civil and Public Services Association have faced disciplianry action for speaking on official union policy. Three are being disciplined for remarks they made on Radio 4's *The World This Weekend*. Others are being disciplined for remarks made at a press conference; one merely wrote to her MP condemning the closure of an occupational guidance centre where she worked. In a separate, slightly different case, one employee has been sacked — and later reinstated — for refusing to take on extra work in line with her union's policy and her contract of employment. According to Bill McClory of the CPSA:

> Management appears to be trying to frighten members of the Department into silence. Elected union officials are being prevented from expressing union policies. Under the guise of the need for civil service neutrality in political matters management are preventing CPSA members taking up trade union issues.

In January Mrs Joyce Butler wrote to her MP, Ken Marks, about the closure of the Manchester Occupational Guidance Centre where she worked as a receptionist — a Tory controlled select committee of the House of Commons had regretted the decision to close 46 of these centres. Mr Marks passed his constituent's letter to Jim Lester, the junior employment minster, for his comments. Lester's civil servants responded, but not as expected.

In February — before Mr Marks sent Mrs Butler's letter to the minister — all employees at the Manchester Occupational Centre had already been required by a Mr Waterhouse of the Manpower Services Commission to sign a 'Security and Disclosure of Information Document', which was full of heavy breathing about the Official Secrets Act and confidentiality. The response to Mrs Butler's letter came from a personnel officer at the MSC, Mr Tolladay, in a 'staff, in confidence memorandum' to Mrs Butler's area personnel officer:

> I enclose copies of the letters Mrs Butler has written to her MP. She seems to have ignored Mr Waterhouse's warnings and you agreed to interview her in the area office. At the interview she should be warned verbally that if she does not stop writing such letters we shall consider disciplinary action.

Dropping an earlier charge that she had disclosed confidential information to Mr Marks, the Department decided to discipline Mrs Butler under the staff code. She was accused of using 'political influence to gain concessions not available to others' and of being guilty of 'ungentlemanly conduct'. On this second point the code on general conduct demands an employee's 'undivided allegiance to the State at all times when it has a claim on his service' and, in his private life, he has to behave discreetly so that he 'might not bring discredit to the service by, for example, heavy gambling and speculation.'

John Cassels, director of the MSC, claims that the meeting was 'to clarify' Mrs Butler's letter, not to discipline her — even though the area personnel officer told Mrs Butler's union representative that the meeting was to discipline her. Cassels says there is no need to apologise, though Tolladay's memo is 'carelessly worded and taken out of context is obviously open to mistunderstanding.'

MEG MACDONALD is a member of Conservative Trade Unionists and a CPSA branch treasurer; she spoke at the Tory Conference, saying the Tory party was alienating government employees

> by unjustified attacks on people who work under pressure most people in this hall cannot know.

Since then she has been interviewed by the management at the Hartlepool Unemployment Benefit Office, where she works, and she is awaiting their judgement.

Three other union members have received notice of disciplinary action after being quoted in *Socialist Worker*. One, Malcolm Rennard made at a press conference attended by members of the national press. The subject of the conference was the sacking of two CPSA members at the Brixton Employment Office, who had been campaigning against conditions in the office and the inadequate service.

Rennard's case has now been dropped: he had anyway, in his capacity as Section Organiser, made comparable comments in the DoE's own staff paper. But another — Jim Farrell, who had been criticial of Jim Prior and the new code of picketing as it was applied at Brixton — has been told that the 'Department view the matter most seriously'. He is accused of taking part in a national political activity — being quoted in *Socialist Worker* — without permission, and thus breaching departmental instructions. According to the staff code he is 'expected to maintain a reserve in political matters and not to put himself forward prominently on one side or the other.'

Similar action is being taken against another trio of CPSA officials who spoke on Radio 4 — at their union HQ's request — about cuts in the number of unemployment benefit offcers. One of them — Harry Stannard — has already received a severe reprimand.

There is plenty to protest about. Already 1,400 jobs have been cut from the labour force required to service 2.1 million unemployed. No new facilities are being made available and in some unemployment offices, such as Corby, the unemployed have been told not to register every week since the staff need more space on the other side of the counter to process the new claims.

The attacks on the CPSA come at a time when the Civil Service Department is trying to restrict the right of civil servants who have been disciplined — or face disciplinary proceedings — to hold union office. The CSD is also trying to limit time off for trade union activities to those narrowly defined as 'industrial relations.'

Fraser's censors lose their case

The Australian government's legal battle against the book *Documents on Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1968-1975* suffered a set back in the Australian High Court earlier this week. Mr Justice Mason rejected the government's argument that publication of the documents represented a breach of confidentiality. He allowed the temporary continuation of an injunction preventing their publication on the grounds of breach of copyright, but showed little enthusiasm for this as a way of controlling the publication of government documents.

The documents in the book deal in detail with the Indonesian takeover of East Timor and the attitude towards this of the British, Australian and American governments. Extracts from some of the documents were published in the *New Statesman* on 21 November and the Australian government has brought an action seeking to compel us to name our source and hand over any documents in our possession.

The injunction in Australia was brought against the *Melbourne Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, preventing them from printing the last two parts of a three part serialisation which contained lengthy quotations from the book. On the question of possible breaches of confidentiality the judge said:

> It is unacceptable in our democratic society that there should be a restraint on the publication of information relating to the government when the only vice of that information is that it enables the public to discuss, review and criticise government action . . . Disclosure itself will serve the public interest in keeping the community informed and promoting discussion of public affairs.

He said that copyright law is infringed

> by copying or reproducing a document. It is not infringed by publishing information or ideas contained in that document.

So long as 'the form of the literary work' is not reproduced, the papers can, if they wish, print the information in a modified form. Clearly the definition of literary work would have to be cast incredibly wide to encompass the prose of style of the average government memo. The judge made it clear that he considered this a very important case which should be heard by the New South Wales Supreme Court as soon as possible.

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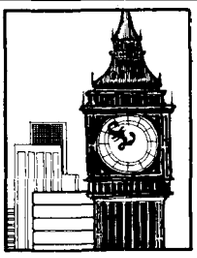

Peter Kellner, Political Editor

The great rose-tinted specs show (part two)

TWO WEEKS AGO I reported the latest findings of Britain's leading monetarist forecaster, Professor Patrick Minford. Alone among forecasters he expects the Government's policies to produce a swift recovery from the present recession. I argued that Minford's view of how the economy works — and his is the most coherent statement of the theories that are supposed to underpin the Government's strategy — is seriously wrong.

Minford has now responded with the following letter. As it raises a number of separate points, I shall comment on each one in turn. Nothing has been omitted from Minford's letter.

Sir, Peter Kellner's diatribe against my forecasts was highly entertaining. How sorry the NS will be to lose him to the comedy scriptwriters. But accuracy is not his strong point.

Kellner says I predict virtually no rise in unemployment in 1981. Not so. The figures in his table are the average for the year excluding school-leavers. My forecast text said that seasonally adjusted unemployment would peak at 2¼ million around the end of 1981; this implies a peak for total ('headline') unemployment of about 2½ million in the early autumn.

Comment: If Minford insists on nit-picking, he should first pick the right nits. What I actually reported him as forecasting was that the recession would bottom out by next spring, and that 'unemployment will peak soon after, at a figure not much higher than it is today'. Overall unemployment is now 2.2 million, with seasonally adjusted adult unemployment already above 2 million.

My statement about output to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee ['There is little sign yet of any recession . . .'], so far from being a 'lulu' was a fact, about the economic indicators at the time [May 1980]. Witness the table of indicators printed on p. 134 of the Committee evidence (also remember that industrial production in the first quarter was no guide because of the steel strike).

Comment: Minford's 'facts' really should have a government health warning attached. The 'table of indicators' was one he provided, from statistics he selected. There were plenty of other indicators available at the time, but which he apparently ignored, that pointed clearly to an impending recession. The Central Statistical Office's analysis of 'shorter leading' and 'coincident' cyclical indicators both showed this; so did the CBI's survey of industrial trends.

In any case, Minford offered his observation to the MPs not simply as a commentary on past facts; it appeared under the general heading, *'Prospects* for the UK economy'.

True, my March forecast of GDP in 1980 now looks like being too high; for this Kellner wants me hung, drawn and quartered. But his friends, the NIESR, in their February Review, forecast a similar figure to mine (-½ per cent against my 0). Are they too for disembowelling?

No. By May, when Minford gave his 'no recession' evidence to MPs, the National Institute had revised their 1980 forecast for GDP downwards, to minus 1.1 per cent. Even that was too optimistic, but the trend was in the right direction. And Cambridge Econometrics (whose forecasts I compared with Minford's two weeks ago) were predicting a GDP decline of 3.4 per cent at the time. In May, Minford was alone in predicting no output decline at all this year.

On inflation forecasts, Kellner should be congratulating me and unplugging his friends' computers. My forecast in March of a very rapid decline in inflation in the second half of 1980 has come true; I was virtually alone among UK forecasters in getting this right.

Congratulations, Patrick. You did get something right; but not for the reasons you gave. Any orthodox Keynesian would expect a rising pound and a rapidly deepening recession to bring down the inflation rate; and most forecasters did anticipate a decline in inflation around now. Since you got both the recession and the level of sterling wrong, to claim the inflation rate is a victory for your model is simply perverse.

Kellner says that using a model to forecast the past is like filling in Littlewoods pools on a Saturday evening. Any competent economist could have told him that was just false. Such 'backward' forecasting is in fact a standard (and tough) tool of model assessment. What is more, it has been done for the Liverpool model both for the period over which it was estimated and for the period afterwards in which of course it has no 'advantage' over those actually forecasting at the time. The assessment is broadly the same for both periods; the details are published in my forecast paper.

My criticism of Minford was, and is, that he has not compared like with like. He has attempted to show that his 'ex post' predictions (i.e., those made after the event) outperformed the National Institute's 'ex ante' predictions (i.e., those made at the time); and he failed to tell MPs this was what he was up to.

True, ex post model analysis is often done. The reason is to distinguish those forecast errors that were the fault of the model from those that were caused by outside events (a miners' strike, a quadrupling of oil prices, a change in government policy). As it happens, the National Institute is doing just such an 'ex post' mortem at the moment. My money is on a National Institute victory in a proper like-with-like comparison.

Kellner treats facts with the subtlety and grace of a bull-moose. What of theories? He regards 'rational expectations' as moonshine. This is the assumption that people use information efficiently to pursue their interests; they don't simply pluck numbers out of the air. May I ask Kellner and his friends what basis they *think people use in fixing wages, prices and interest rates? Would they really lend money when they expect negative real interest rates, as Cambridge Econometrics say? Would they really raise prices and wages year after year at 10 per cent or more when money supply growth is steadily falling, so pricing themselves and their firms steadily out of the market place and pushing unemployment to astronomic heights? Rational expectations predicts people will make mistakes, but will learn intelligently from them; Peter Kellner et al apparently predict that they are lunatics.*

Yours faithfully, Patrick Minford

Steady on, now. I am not sure who my 'friends' are supposed to be; but if they are that changing community known collectively as Keynesians, who have rescued Britain's economy before and in due course will be called on to do so again, then our answers are as follows.

Wages, prices and interest rates are fixed by the interraction of various things: government policy, past inflation rates, subjective ideas of fairness and the going rate, cost levels, demand conditions, and so on. Different non-monetarist economists have different ideas of how the process works in detail (for example on the general relationship between wage inflation and the level of unemployment), and on which influences are most important at any given time. What is in dispute is Minford's idea that wage settlements are decisively influenced by perceptions of the Government's monetary policy. Minford has not provided a scintilla of evidence that shop stewards or company managers actually think in the way he believes they do.

Next, Minford seems amazed that people could lend money when they expect negative real interest rates (i.e., when interest rates fall below the rate of inflation). Minford may not lend in such circumstances, but millions of people do. The proportion of personal income that people save — and largely invest in banks, building societies and national savings — actually tends to be highest when inflation is high and real interest rates are negative.

Finally, Minford poses a question about the causes of high unemployment. He makes a particular assumption about the connection between money supply, prices and output, and then argues that people will behave rationally so that high unemployment is avoided. If high unemployment in fact occurs, then Minford says it is because people make mistakes in fixing wages and prices. The alternative view is that it is Minford who has got his connections wrong. To maintain that the present recession is all the fault of pay bargainers, and nothing to do with the Government's monetarist policies, is economic nonsense. It is also morally obscene.

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Rob Edwards reports on radiation dangers in Scotland

Dockyards damage your health

THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE is refusing to release details which would enable those who work on nuclear submarines at Rosyth naval dockyard to discover the hazards of radiation to which they are exposed. In addition, trade unions on the site accuse the MoD of imposing inadequate safety standards in the yard, which has working conditions among the worst of all British nuclear installations.

The maximum permitted radiation for any nuclear worker in Britain is 5 rems, but this is likely to be reduced shortly. Following a recommendation from the joint TUC/CBI Technical Working Party, the Health and Safety Commission is expected to suggest a new 1.5 rem 'investigation level'. Under such a system a plant safety officer would be required to make a report on each occasion on which a worker was exposed to more than 1.5 rems and to make their report available to the union.

Some 400 to 500 of the 8,500 people employed at Rosyth are regularly exposed to low-level radiation as a result of working on Polaris submarine reactors. Information on exposure levels is not produced by the MoD on a regular basis, though the navy claim that the average exposure in all three naval dockyards was 0.48 rems in 1979. Figures from the Health and Safety Commission cover only workers in civil nuclear installations, and show that 1,400, or 10 per cent of the total, are expose to more than 1.5 rems. When contacted by the *New Statesman* the MoD at first said that the average annual exposure of Rosyth radiation workers was 'around half a rem'. Subsequently this answer was withdrawn on the grounds that it was not policy to give information on individual dockyards. The ministry added that the figure 'may not be particularly accurate, it's just what the managment feel is about right'.

DAVID ANDERSON, the safety officer of the National Union of Sheet Metal Workers, Coppersmiths, Heating and Domestic Engineers, says that most of his 15 welders are getting over 3 or 4 rems a year. Figures for the 28 laggers who have worked on the ractor in recent years show that 26 of them have received average annual dosages of over 2 rems. This year 21 laggers who have already received almost 1 rem are being asked to work in one of the other dockyards where they have to take another 3 rems within three weeks.

Several things worry the workers in the Rosyth yard. First, exposure is measured by a film badge on the worker's chest but some particularly sensitive organs are never measured separately. Alec Falconer, the TGWU steward for the laggers, explained that the Rosyth workers are working in much closer contact with the nuclear material than, for example, workers in nuclear power stations, but he cannot remember anyone having the exposure level of their testicles measured.

Second, there is concern over the poor provision of emergency washing facilities. Under statutory regulations such facilities must be close at hand, in order to remove any excess radiation due to a spillage, but at Rosyth there is nothing within 150 yards of the reactor compartment. The men are also worried about the inadequacy of their protective face masks and local TGWU officials are anxious about the union's willingness nationally to negotiate compensation of 'up to £1,200'.

A study published last year[1] looked at the effects of radiation over ten years on the blood cells of 200 workers at the dockyard. It showed that among workers exposed to less than five rems a year there was up to a fourfold increase in chromosome aberrations, with the extent of chromosome damage almost exactly matching the level of exposure. The fierce argument among experts is whether such damage increases the likelihood of cancer. One study[2] of the Portsmouth Naval Dockyard in New Hampshire — the US equivalent of Rosyth — claims to have identified a significantly increased rate of cancer and leukemia deaths among populations exposed to low level of radiation. A more recent analysis of the six admitted leukaemia deaths at the Atomic Energy's Authority's Dounreay establishment has suggested that less than one death should have been expected.[3] And it is now widely accepted that there is no 'threshold' dose of radiation below which exposure is fully safe.

To investigate fully the hazards of working at Rosyth the trades unions need the records of all workers who have worked in the yard, not just those currently employed there. But the MoD have refused to release this information on the grounds that it is confidential medical information and can only be released when specifically requested by individual workers. Indeed the national Radiological Protection Board is currently compiling a national Registry of Radiation Workers with the aim of gathering all relevant information on workers and former workers in all British nuclear establishments in order to determine whether occupational exposure does or does not damage health. The only group of ex-nuclear workers who are not currently planned to join the Registry are those from the naval dockyards.

[1] Evans, Buckton et al. *Radiation-induced Chromosome Aberrations in Nuclear Dockyard Workers,* Nature Vol 277, 15 February 1979

[2] Najarian and Colton, *Mortality from Leukemia and Cancer in Shipyard Nuclear workers,* The Lancet, 13 May 1979.

[3] Blackith, *Assessing The Hazards of Low Level Radiation,* Irish Medical Times, Oct. 1980.

Christopher Hitchens

To give, and not to count the cost

THATCHERISM IS ALSO for export. Hidden away in Sir Geoffrey Howe's finagling statement last week was yet another cut in the overseas aid budget. That reduction of £12 million brought the total fall in the lifetime of this government to 21 per cent. Features of this decline include:

- A greater politicisation of 'aid' by the Tories.
- The abolition of the Ministry of Overseas Development.
- The collapse of programmes and institutes for foreign students.
- The featherbedding and subsidy of wasteful luxury 'aid' projects by the taxpayer — including the expenditure of £4 million on a Club Mediterranee hotel in the Caribbean.

Taking these points in order, it can be shown that overseas aid has been reduced by something like four times as much as the average cut in public expenditure. This makes nonsense of the government claim that such a policy is 'in line' with the general strategy (if strategy there be). As a seasonal touch, it might be noted that the planned drop in overseas commitments for next year is *seven times* the total collected by all voluntary and charitable agencies such as Oxfam.

That is to speak of development aid. But the Tories have done more than cut the programme. They have also bent it. As far back as February of this year, the relevant minister, Neil Marten, told the Commons that:

> We believe that it is right at the present time to give greater weight in the allocation of our aid to political, industrial and commercial considerations alongside our basic developmental objectives.

This euphemistic formulation conceals a policy turn which will increasingly 'tie' British aid to sweetheart deals signed by the recipient.

This politicisation of aid, which has meant more money for Turkey and Pakistan and less for India and Bangladesh, has also led to the scrapping of the independent 'Ministry of Overseas Development'. That department is now the Overseas Development Agency of the Foreign Office, and thus political invigilation of aid decisions can be more directly supervised that was the case hitherto. The Foreign Office does not seem to have fought very hard in Cabinet to save the £230 million removed from future aid projects of the development and humanitarian type.

Nor has it stuck up very tenaciously for the rights of overseas students. There will be 20 per cent fewer of them sponsored by official overseas development agencies. And, as from next year, the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University will also have its budget cut by one third. The Institute, which had built up a fine reputation for research, teaching and overseas assignments, will now be reduced from 25 fellows to 12.

But let it not be said that the government is parsimonious in every respect. It may have broken its pledges to Zimbabwe for reconstruction aid, it may have lied about every project in the Third World for years to come. But it knows when to be generous. Sir Geoffrey Howe cut £12 million more from the budget last Monday. The following day, a special subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs Committee met to consider a British government grant of £4m for one single Club Mediterranee project in the Turks and Caicos islands just south of the Bahamas.

Here is the sort of aid programme the Tories understand. As an 'infrastructural incentive' for Club Med, we are building them an international airport and resurfacing the roads on the islands of Providenciales. The idea was to create 200 new jobs at £20,000 per job (tell that to the Clyde and the Mersey) and to 'develop' the island. But the Commons committee has discovered that there are only ten people out of 357 on the island without a job, that the local environment is threatened, and that Club Med want to dodge the local 'bed tax' of a dollar a bed. (Cost for guests is £385 per week.) No minister could be found to answer questions on this project, but as far as can be determined all the contracts will go to British firms. Most of the labour will probably be brought in from outside.

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Dying men who stir the boiling pot

Time is running out for the H Block hunger strikers — but also for the British government. MARY HOLLAND reports.

TWO WEEKS AGO in the Falls Road in Belfast, a woman at a demonstration in support of the H Block hunger strikers asked me, quite casually, whether I thought people in Dublin would burn the British Embassy down 'this time'. While it seems likely that employees of HM Foreign Office who work in the solid building in Merrion Road can rest easy this Saturday, when the first march on the Embassy in support of the hunger strikers is due to take place, they must know that feelings north and south of the border are more bitter than at any time since 1972, when the last British Embassy in Dublin was burnt down. This week emotions are running even higher with the announcement that three women in Armagh Prison have joined the seven men in a hunger strike which they pledge will be to the death. The eldest of these women is 24. All three have been serving sentences for terrorist crimes since their teens.

In Northern Ireland the polarisation of the two communities seems almost complete, worse even than after Bloody Sunday in 1972 when 13 civilian marchers in Derry were killed by the Paratroop regiment. It is as though the issue now extends far beyond the hunger strike itself to encompass all that festering resentment against the British for the bungling, fudging, irresolute inertia of the past twelve years, the attempts to buy off first one side and then the other, the lack of any real political will to grapple with the problem.

This mood is particularly depressing on the Protestant side, representing a retreat to the laager which appears to span the entire community from church leaders baying for vengeance to paramilitary groups. The day after the young woman in the Falls Road was asking me about the chances of the British Embassy in Dublin getting burnt down, a Protestant doctor said: 'You can't have a rational discussion about it, not even with people who think of themselves as moderates. Protestants just think the whole thing is got up by the Cardinal and if he didn't back the hunger strikers no one in the Catholic community would care about it.'

For the Protestants this has become a crunch issue. There is a widespread belief that if the British Government gives way now then it is capable of betraying them into a united Ireland in the morning. This insecurity is reinforced by the knowledge that the latest British political initiative is in ruins, that patience with Northern Ireland is beginning to wear very thin, even among Conservative MPs, and that Mrs Thatcher has this week been talking with the hated premier of the Irish Republic, Charles Haughey, at the EEC summit.

ON THE CATHOLIC side, the six weeks of the hunger strike have seen the largest street demonstrations since the early seventies. Again there is the sense that for the Catholic poor who live in the ghetto areas of Belfast and Derry, the emotion extends far beyond the ten men and women on the hunger strike protest. Since the Republican prisoners began their 'blanket protest' in 1976 I have covered any number of demonstrations organised by Provisional Sinn Fein. The marches of recent weeks have been quite different in character, recalling in intensity the civil rights marches of the late sixties.

Many of the demonstrators are painfully poor. There are a lot of women with strained tired faces, dressed in thin clothes against the biting wind and rain. Many of them walk with young children or stand silently watching on the pavements, putting coins and notes in the collecting boxes that pass by. For the past decade they have borne the brunt of the suffering, the violence and, in recent months, the economic cuts in some of the most deprived areas of the United Kingdom. It seems a very long time indeed since Jim Callaghan walked in glory through their streets and told them that he was on the side of the oppressed and that he would bring them justice. For most of them the fragile peace of the past year or so is the best life they have known.

Irish Press

Dubliners demonstrate in support of the hunger strikers

Now that, too, is threatened. They are frightened that if the hunger strikers die the Provisionals will escalate their campaign and that the Protestant paramilitaries will resume in earnest their sectarian killings. Every time that Mrs Thatcher gets up in the House of Commons and says that there will be 'no concessions to murderers', the threat becomes a bit more real and the prospect of bearing it seems unendurable.

There is also a sense among Catholics that, in the words of one speaker at a rally in Derry, 'if we lose this one we'll lose everything we've fought for'. Maybe they sense that this is the view of the British Army. Already there are reports of a significant divide between the Army and the Northern Ireland Office on the one hand and the Ulster police on the other. The Army, it is said, regards the hunger strike as the Provos' last card. It is confident that any violence following the death of the hunger strikers can be limited and easily contained, and that the final effect will be to break the IRA and destroy its support in Catholic areas. The Royal Ulster Constabulary, which has had previous unhappy experiences of Army forecasts that the Provos are on the point of being finally smashed, is far less sanguine about the situation. The RUC's opinion is that the deaths of hunger strikers are far more likely to spark off widespread riots in Catholic areas, possibly accompanied by Provisional IRA violence, and that this will draw retaliation from Protestant extremists. The Ulster Defence Association is already on record as saying that any such escalation in Catholic violence would necessitate their going into Catholic areas to 'eliminate' Republicans.

In such a situation, any attempt to evaluate the case for and against granting the prisoners' demands seems almost irrelevant. But while drawing attention to the present dangers, it is also important to repeat some of the facts that are in danger of getting lost.

THE GOVERNMENT emphasises that the prisoners are violent criminals who have been convicted by the due process of law. No one denies that the hunger strikers, like the vast majority of men and women on the 'dirty protest', are members of Republican terrorist groups who have been convicted of crimes which include murders, bombings and shootings. Where socialists have to question the official line is whether the methods used to convict them are not so extraordinary as to give legitimacy to their claim for some kind of special status.

All the prisoners at present on the H Block protest were tried and convicted by no-jury 'Diplock' courts. These were instituted in 1973 and get their name from the law lord who was charged by the British government to devise an efficient alternative to internment without trial, which was causing the government grave international embarrassment. As well as abolishing juries the Diplock courts have also changed dramatically the rules relating to the admissibility of confessions. Eighty per cent of those found guilty in these courts are convicted on the basis of confessions made to the police. The methods of interrogation used to get these confessions have been the subject of intense criticism both from official inquiries, like the Bennett Report of 1979, and from organisations like Amnesty.

The hunger strikers run true to average form. Six of the seven were convicted on the basis of their own confessions, though in one case this was an unsigned 'verbal' given to the police. The seventh man, Brendan Hughes, was

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already a special category prisoner since the crimes of which he was convicted (murder of a policeman, possession of firearms and explosives) had been committed prior to 1976. However, in 1977 he got into a fight over a prison officer. Accounts of this vary depending on whom you talk to, but the result was that Hughes lost his special status.

Six of the men were convicted on their own confessions. In the cases of two of these, Thomas McKearney and Raymond McCartney, doctors gave evidence in court that they believed they had been badly beaten up during interrogation. Here is what Peter Taylor of Panorama had to say about McKearney in his book *Beating the Terrorists?:*

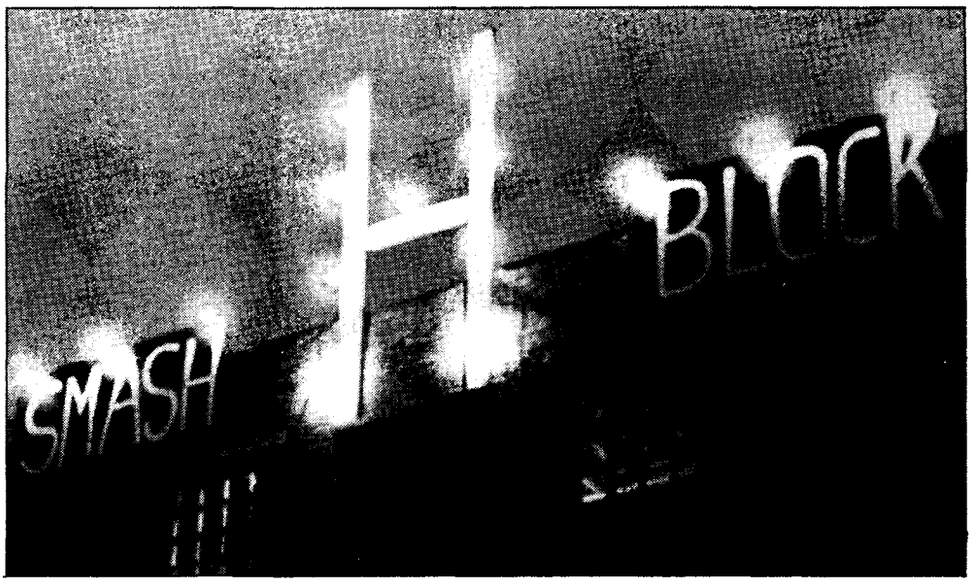
> When Dr Irwin (a police surgeon) saw him at Townhall Street a week later (after his arrest) he was pale, nervous and exhausted. He had a black eye that looked fairly recent and bruises whose colour suggested that they were five to six days old. His forehead was swollen and many of the muscles at the back of the neck, forearm and abdomen were swollen and tender . . . McKearney alleged that his head and trunk were covered with a black plastic sack, the type used for laundry and refuse collection. He said that he was beaten around the head while the bag was pulled tight around his throat. He managed to tear a hole in the bag so he could breathe.

When the hunger strike began it seemed that there might be some room for an honourable compromise, either by making concessions under the general heading of 'prison reform' — a possibility hinted at by Mr Michael Allison in a *World in Action* programme last week — or by teasing out the fine print of the recent ruling by the European Commission of Human Rights, which found against the prisoners' claim but also criticised the British government for its inflexibility on the issue. These possibilities have become more remote since Mrs Thatcher's personal pronouncements on the issue. Now almost the only hope for a change of direction seems to be if the Irish premier, Charles Haughey, can succeed where her own advisers have failed in persuading her of the gravity of the situation for both parts of Ireland.

AT THE MOMENT Mr Haughey has some claim on Mrs Thatcher's attentions. Since he became premier of the Irish Republic in December last year, with a reputation as a hard line Republican, he has gone out of his way to impress the British government as a pragmatic and co-operative politician. Increased spending on security by the Irish government, especially in the border areas, has resulted in a series of dramatic arms hauls and has generally made life much more difficult for the Provisionals. Mr Haughey has also assiduously refrained from embarrassing Mrs Thatcher politically, either over the hunger strike or by publicly gloating over the latest failure in British policy in the North. But the time has come when he may ask for some return for all this, and that return could well be a deal on the hunger strike.

The Irish premier can point to ample evidence of what the effects could be in the South if the hunger strikers die. Before the strike started it would have been reasonable to suppose that the H Block protestors had almost no support in the Republic. Yet in the six weeks since the hunger strike started, marches and demonstrations in the South have gathered numbers far in excess of their organisers' wildest expectations.

More ominously, bitter arguments over the rights and wrongs of the case have already



Pacemaker Press

An illumination on the roof of Unity Flats, Belfast

divided the Irish parliament, and seem to be spreading to half the most venerable institutions in the country. Trade union branches, local councils, even such revered monoliths as the Gaelic Athletic Association are reeling from its repercussions. On one national newspaper 35 journalists signed a statement dissociating themselves from a leader in which their editor had some hard words for Gerry Fitt for his attack on the hunger strikers. Even the Catholic church has not remained immune from the general mudslinging.

For the moment the abuse is verbal and literary, confined to angry union meetings or anguished letters to the *Irish Times*. But as Mr Haughey knows very well, that could change. As always in these dreadful, repetitive Irish situations, Yeats has a verse for it. In his poem for those executed after the Easter rising are the lines:

> For who can talk of give and take
> What should be and what not
> While those dead men are loitering there
> To stir the boiling pot?

There is still time to talk of give and take, and perhaps even to still the land by doing so. But does anyone in the British government realise how quickly that time is running out?

Duncan Campbell

Back to the middle ages — official

SECRET GOVERNMENT plans anticipate the return of mediaeval style stocks as a punishment for criminals during a wartime emergency and perhaps other crises. Details of this plan are contained in a Home Office memorandum entitled *Briefing notes for wartime controllers,* details of which have never been published before. The memorandum — issued in 1976 — specifies punishments which emergency-appointed 'Commissioners of Justice' may impose. Punishment number three is 'Exposure to public disapproval.'

However, such an intriguing backward step in history may be preferable to other punishments listed in the memorandum: forced labour ('communal labour') and starvation ('reduced rations').

The memorandum gives further details of the government's wartime legal plans. It warns recipients — all of whom have been designated as wartime 'controllers' — that they should pass its information on to 'no other person'.

Under Emergency Powers legislation, the government assumes, Parliament would grant Regional Commissioners complete, autocratic powers. They in turn would appoint 'Commissioners of Justice' who might or might not have held judicial office before the crisis. Through the Commissioners of Justice, the Regional Commissioner could 'impose penalties as he sees fit'.

Lay Commissioners would sit in twos or threes. But even one 'would still constitute a court'. Contenders for a firing squad would get a jury of sorts — either five ordinary jury members, or three Commissioners. There would be no appeals against verdicts or sentence, however — just an occasional 'review' by 'a Senior Commissioner'.

The Home Office generously notes that certain current 'anti-social activities' such as squatting and 'using chattels' (stealing what the community needs) would become legitimate. Mobile columns of armed

'police support units' would concentrate on other forms of 'anti-social behaviour'.

Other parts of the same document detail the powers controllers may expect to have to seize goods and resources and direct labour. Heavy emphasis is also given to the 'Collapse of the Monetary Economy' and how, eventually, capitalism might be relaunched into a brave new post-nuclear world.

The Treasury appears to reckon that with wise advice from itself 'and the Private Sector', a 'new monetary system' should be established 'as soon as possible — perhaps one year' after an attack. In the meantime, the old baubles might be used as a suitable form of 'token exchange'.

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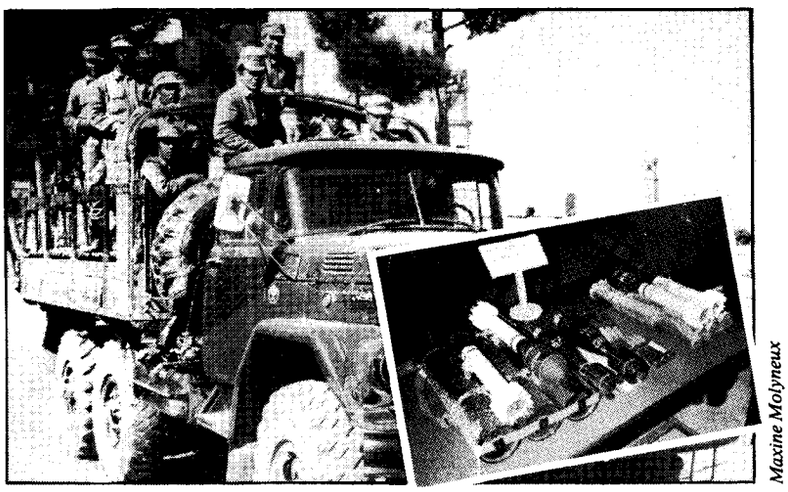
The limits of Russian imperialism

FRED HALLIDAY, who has just returned from Afghanistan, argues that it is futile to call for an unconditional Soviet withdrawal.

KABUL HAS TWO surprises for the visitor from the west. The first is its apparent calm, belying the image of a strife-torn capital. By day the broad streets are full of people, the shops appear well-stocked. Among the crowds, Russian civilians can be seen shopping in the Shahr-i No area, or strolling with their families around the Mikroyan housing project to the east of the city. Neither in Kabul, not in the north-western city of Herat, was there evidence of direct rebel activity. There was none of the night-time shooting that had been reported in earlier weeks; daytime security at government buildings in the capital was, by the standards of Belfast, rather lax.

Yet the tensions are soon visible. The size of the urban crowds in Kabul is in part explained by the fact that the city's population has more or less doubled in the last year, to reach a figure of around one and a half millions. The inhabitants of the rural areas have fled to avoid the fighting there. Whilst government supply programmes and Russian aid have sustained stocks of food and fuel, there is severe overcrowding in the poorer parts of the city.



Fighting against bandits who destroy schools: Afghan soldiers on patrol in Herat. Inset: British and American-made anti-tank weapons captured from the rebels. Is secret western aid getting through?

Maxine Molyneux

The Soviet military presence on the streets is slight by day, but it builds up after dark when armoured personnel carriers and tanks take up positions on squares and street corners to await the ten o'clock curfew. A group of Afghan soldiers whom I ran into on a night-time patrol also expect that the situation may worsen again in the winter months. 'It is getting cold in the mountains, and the counter-revolutionaries may come here to make trouble', one of them

The second surprise is the extent to which the ruling People's Democratic Party is playing down its image as a radical socialist grouping. They have restored the old pre-revolutionary flag, and the red flag of the previous Khalq regime has been effaced from the control tower of Kabul airport. There are no slogans in the streets calling for the implementation of socialist policies and no portraits of Babrak Karmal can be seen in public places. Far from relying on a class-based rhetoric, the government has in recent weeks taken to calling for the construction of a 'Fatherland Front' to rally all who support it against what is presented as a threat from Pakistan, China and the west.

Since Karmal's government came to power with Soviet support last December, many of the policies previously pursued by the Khalqi government have been placed in abeyance. The land reform programme has been almost completely halted, and in some areas former landlords have been permitted to return.

IN THE FACE OF Islamic and tribal reaction, the government has also been driven back on the question of women's emancipation. While in Kabul itself there is a substantial level of women's educatton and many young women have abandoned the *chadri* or all-enveloping cloak and veil, programmes for educating women in the rural areas seem to have ground to a halt. So too has the attempt to lower the bride-price: daughters are treated as a source of wealth in the countryside, and some women who married according to the new regulations were shot by the rebels.

A very different area of policy change has been in the realm of human rights: there has been an end to the systematic torture, mass executions and mass arrests in the towns that marked the regime of the late President Hafizullah Amin. Seventeen of Amin's associates, convicted of involvement in his crimes, have been executed, as has one pro-Chinese guerrilla leader captured in the capital; but most of those arrested in Kabul after demonstrations earlier in the year have been released and two student leaders sentenced to death have had their sentences commuted.

The Russians can take some credit for having put a stop to the murderous practices of the Amin period and for staying the hand of the present Parcham government; but the situation is different in the rural areas where the war has been extremely brutal and where Soviet forces have been doing the main fighting. The rebels have been involved in systematic atrocities; torturing and mutilating those they capture. But the Russian counter-insurgency operations have, on reliable evidence, involved needless destruction of villages and civilian deaths.

Estimates of the Russian military contingent vary from 45,000 (the Soviet Embassy figure) to between 85,000 and 100,000 (the western figure); there is no evidence of any ethnic bias in the Soviet forces, but it does seem that a higher than average proportion of the fighting units are made up of Young Communist League or Komsomol members.

ALTHOUGH WEAKENED by defection, the Afghan army has by no means disappeared. Ordinary recruits are generally unwilling to engage in serious fighting, but they are used for patrol duties in the urban areas, and the regime retains the support of a substantial politicised officer corps. To compensate for the low morale among recruits, the government has drafted up to thirty thousand young party supporters into the army and they have participated in rural offensives.

The Russian and Afghan government forces have been able to achieve some military objectives. The main towns have been secured against any serious threat, and military cordons have been established around them.

The Russians have also been able to stem the flow of weapons from the Afghan army to the rebels, who are complaining openly about the drying up of this vital supply source. Indeed both Russian and western diplomatic sources believe that the rebels have over the past few months been forced to break up into small hit-and-run units, avoiding major confrontations. Some areas of previous rebel activity, such as the Kunar valley or the fruit-growing plain north of Kabul, have been at least temporarily

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secured by clearing operations.

The predominant picture in the countryside, however, remains one of insecurity: Barbrak Karmal's house in a village but a few miles from Kabul was recently burnt down by rebels, and the Minister of Tribal Affairs, Faiz Mohammad Faiz, was killed on a visit to the countryside. Even on western estimates the Russians have committed far too few troops to hold down the thirteen thousand villages that dot the mountainous terrain, and Soviet officials insist that their role is not to occupy the country so much as 'to protect' the Afghan government. They have therefore tended to withdraw from areas they enter and this has allowed the rebels to return.

THE RUSSIANS are also constrained by their reluctance to cross the Pakistani frontier and attack rebel bases and supply lines there. They appear unwilling, for political reasons, to do even what is technically possible to seal the wild border between the two countries. Despite occasional forays across the frontier, the Russians are wary of becoming involved in direct confrontations with Pakistan that might only legitimate further western aid to Zia ul-Haq.

For its part the Kabul government has been restraining the more militant Pakistani opposition groups, based in Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier, in the hope of being able to negotiate at some future date with the Islamabad authorities. They have tended to support those Pakistani groups that favour a more cautious challenge to Zia, such as the People's Party of the late Zulfikar Bhutto and the National Democratic Party of Wali Khan.

The major problems faced by Babrak Karmal and his Soviet allies are, however, internal and political. Although Babrak's policies have been more humane and far less socially provocative than those of his Khalqi predecessors, he has been as yet unable to win a broad popular following. This is partly because of the atrocities of the Amin government, and partly because of the present regime is so associated with foreign troops. But it is also because of the state's inability to guarantee security in the villages and to protect its personnel and institutions there.

In their fight against the central government, the rebels have drawn upon traditional patterns of tribal feuding and banditry, which appeal to many in the countryside. Extortion and looting have played an important part in their military operations, while many of the rebel leaders in Pakistan have embezzled refugee aid in order to promote their own business interests.

The social character of much of the rebellion is also evident from the targets the rebels choose to attack. Over one hundred schools have been destroyed in Herat province alone, and present diplomatic sources confirm that around half of all the educational and medical facilities in the Afghan countryside have been destroyed by the rebels this year.

THE OTHER SUBSTANTIAL political problem facing the government is the continuing conflict within its own ranks between followers of the Khalq and Parcham factions. It seems to be untrue that the two groups have been involved in assassinating members of each other's following, but the Parchamis do not disguise their determination to reduce the Khalqis' influence, since they blame them for the excesses of the Taraki and Amin periods. The Parchamis claim that it will be impossible to gain the confidence of the population until all those associated with the brutalities of the Khalq regime are removed from power.

On their side the Khalqis disown the atrocities of Amin, but remain loyal to the memory of the first revolutionary President, Nur Mohammad Taraki. They claim that their members still form the majority of both the party and the officer corps.

Nothing I saw or head in Afghanistan led me to believe that there is going to be any major reversal of Soviet policy in that country, or to doubt that the Soviet forces will stay until the rebellion is overcome. Despite much speculation to this effect, there is no evidence that the Russians promoted the April 1978 seizure of power by the PDP, nor were they eager to send their troops to Afghanistan when the rebellion began to gather force. While they allowed Amin to put through his disastrous policies for far too long, they first tried to remove him in September 1979 by encouraging President Taraki to carry out a palace coup. Only when this failed did they resort to a direct purge of Amin, backed by the intervention of their troops.

THERE IS MUCH that remains obscure about the circumstances surrounding the Soviet intervention last December, and an inordinate amount of time is spent by Russian and Afghan officials alike trying to prove that Amin was a CIA agent. But the Russian claim, so loudly contested in the west, that Amin himself invited in Soviet troops is apparently true. He is on record as having told this to a conservative Arab newspaper one day before he was overthrown, and the Khalqis themselves do not deny that for some time previously Amin was asking for Soviet help.

Conversations with Parchami supporters also bring out the degree to which throughout the Khalqi period their faction was waging an underground struggle against Taraki and Amin. While Barbrak and his closest associates were exiled, many of the people now in key positions were being tortured in prison by Amin's followers, or were hiding from arrest. The Russians are certainly wrong to claim that the overthrow of Amin was merely an internal Afghan affair; but, while they provided the key elements in Amin's removal, their intervention

John Minnion

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was co-ordinated with an active inner-party opposition that had for some months been opposing Amin. The ironic conclusion, which the Russians are precluded from admitting, is that both factions of the party were therefore willing to see them send troops into Afghanistan.

The focus on the issue of Soviet troops in Afghanistan has obscured what is perhaps an even more fundamental issue, namely the viability of the PDP's reforming programme. It is on this that the evaluation of the Russian role will ultimately turn. For the rebels, the reforming programme is to be rejected; for the Parchamis the revolution was long overdue and is now irreversible. While the atrocities of the Amin period and the present reliance on foreign troops constitute liabilities in winning popular support, they maintain that they have no option but to hold the line and try, gradually, to continue with the modernisation of their country.

Although it is greatly exaggerated by Russian and Afghan government statements, the level of foreign support for the rebels is nonetheless important: Pakistan provides an open frontier, a secure refuge, and some military support, while money and arms are coming from a variety of sources, including China and Egypt. Rebel forces have also been found with supplies of British anti-tank rockets, which I saw, and this can only arouse the suspicion that Thatcher and Carrington have come through on their pledges of support.

Yet the truth, which must be cynically evident to those aiding the rebels, is that barring a major change inside the USSR there is no realistic prospect of the Afghan guerrillas being able to prevail. As long as it lasts, the war in Afghanistan will, at relatively little cost to the west, provide a convenient issue for mobilising third world countries against Moscow and for winning easy credit in the Muslim world. Yet, given the impossibility of the rebels' actually winning, the result of such support for them will only be to prolong the Soviet forces' sojourn in Afghanistan. It can, not inaccurately, be called a policy of fighting to the last Afghan.

The issue at stake is not the existence of a revolutionary and pro-Soviet government in Kabul: the west accepted that after April 1978 when it recognised the Taraki and Amin governments.

The issue is the presence of Soviet combat troops in the country. Yet quite apart from the political capital to be gained by keeping the Russians in Afghanistan, one can ask how far those who demand an immediate Soviet withdrawal, whether on the Right or the Left, would really welcome it. Such a move would almost certainly lead to a long civil war in which the many political, ethnic and tribal divisions of Afghan society would come even further to the fore. Such a conflict would be unlikely to bring any benefit to the Afghan people and, given the temptations for external involvement, it would open the door to new international tensions. If in the final analysis an ultra-conservative and tribally-based regime were to emerge, it is hard to see what good this would do the improverished population of Afghanistan.

THERE IS ANOTHER option, however, namely international negotiation aimed at removing the causes of the Soviet intervention and in particular the support from abroad which the Afghan rebels are receiving. It is fruitless calling for a Soviet withdrawal as long as Pakistan acts as a base area for the rebels, and allows a variety of other countries to use it as a transit facility. The cessation of such foreign involvement would not of itself end the rebellion, which has other roots inside Afghanistan itself; but it would remove the major instigatory factor and thereby hasten the withdrawal of Soviet forces. It might also bring nearer the chance, at present remote, of negotiations between Babrak Karmal's government and the less intransigent sections of the rebel movement. Those who look forward to a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan have, therefore, a clear choice before them.

NEXT WEEK: Gerard Chaliand reports from the rebel side. Any letters or other contributions to this discussion about the best future course for Afghanistan will be welcomed.

Judy Dempsey, in Warsaw, interviews Jacek Kuron

Poland's historic compromise

AS TENSIONS MOUNT in Warsaw, a critical debate is taking place within Solidarity over how far and fast it should press for reform. Its radical wing frequently continues to confront the government, demanding a speedy implementation of the Gdansk Agreement. The moderate wing within the union is led by Jacek Kuron — one of the leading members of KOR, the Social Self Defence Committee — who explained his position to me this week:

> We need each other. One to confront, the other to negotiate and indeed moderate. I suppose what we are trying to do is to shape the situation and the relationship between the union and the government in such a way that would allow as much space as possible for self-government, independence and democracy.

For Kuron, and indeed for Lech Walesa —the leader of the Gdansk Solidarity Union —compromise and negotiation are essential. As one editor of *Robotnik* (the now official workers' newspaper) told me:

> The fact that we can talk in terms of negotiation and discussion with the government implies a revolution — a revolution of attitudes.

Kuron, though well aware of the possibility of Soviet intervention, is more concerned with dialogue between Solidarity and the government:

> I am unambiguously on the side of compromise. We are now responsible for a mass social movement. I would rather have a dialogue with a Polish government than with any external force. What Solidarity is slowly attaining is a partnership between the organised society and the Communist Party.

Politically, Solidarity has achieved some of its aims. From the outset Walesa wanted, as he said to me, 'more space . . . as much as possible for self-government, independence and democracy'.

Some forms of democracy are already revealed in the newspapers where, instead of the leading articles warning of a Soviet intervention, the columns and leaders openly discuss corruption, the economic problems, the future of the Polish Communist Party and the plans for the next few months. Even Miroslaw Chojecki, the editor of *Nowa* — Poland's largest unofficial publishing house — has been back to his old job at the Nuclear Research Institute at Swierk, near Warsaw. He was sacked from his job in 1977 for his publishing activities and his connections with KOR.

KURON, Walesa and the union members still have difficulty in working out their relationship with the Communist Party. While calling for participation and democratisation, they simultaneously declare that they are 'a non-political organisation'.

Sooner or later they will have to decide whether or not democratisation means political participation rather than operating outside the conventional structures of power. For Kuron — and he is in agreement with Walesa on this issue — the role of the party does not prevent participation within the official Polish political structure:

> The leading role of the Communist Party should be reformulated in a very basic way. The question is will the Soviet Union agree to this? Of course not. But then, the Soviet Union have never said what they have wanted. I think the whole thing has changed to such an extent that there is no going back to June, July or August. We must go forward. There is now a mass social movement. We must try to place the democratic institutions alongside the leading role of the Communist Party. That is what the Gdansk Agreement — that historic compromise — is all about.

Solidarity would agree to the party having control over the army, military manoeuvres, foreign affairs and alliances, so long as 'the other domains of society are areas of negotiation and compromise.'

THE GREATEST DILEMMA for both Solidarity and the government is the question of economic policy. Solidarity believes that democratisation and liberalisation are incompatible with a centralised controlled economy. The government have promised reforms of the system of planning and management and indeed have set up a reform commission. But the 1968 reform proposals — which promised decentralisation — were swamped in Gierek's 'New Development Strategy', which committed Poland to a centralised policy of rapid industrial expansion. The failure of this policy and the failure to introduce the promised decentralisation are intricately linked, and contributed to the crisis of 1980.

There are signs that the government has learnt from these mistakes. Stefan Olszowski, the Central Committee Secretary in charge of economic matters, and devoted to reform, stated recently:

> It is obvious to everybody that reforms in the area of planning and management are a vital necessity . . . the most general shape of the reform will stem from the principle of increased self-reliance of economic organisations and of increased influence . . . of the workers.

Kuron described solidarity's economic ambitions as

> . . . straightforward. Reform would be based first of all on the autonomy of the factory enterprises, where there would be structures of workers' self management. Emphasis would be based on supply and demand . . . There'll be so many problems with economic reform in Poland.

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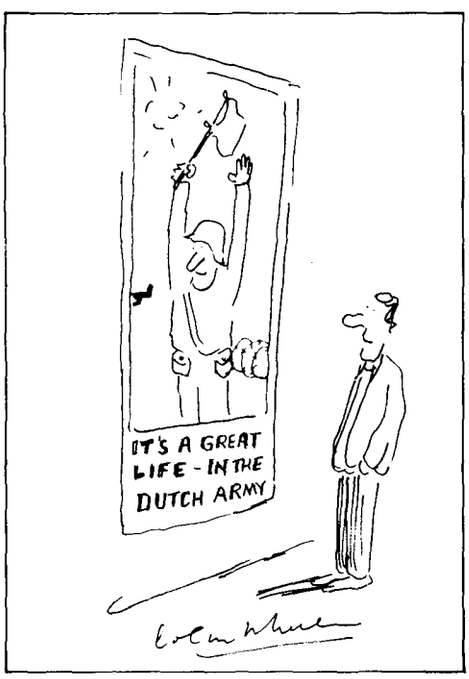
DEFENCE

Disarmers in uniform

MARTIN CLEAVER reports on Dutch unilateralists with a difference.

THE DUTCH MINISTRY of Defence recently received a delegation of four anti-nuclear protesters. Not in itself an unusual event, you may think. The continental class of '68 chose the road of environmental instead of class consciousness and managed, in Holland at least, to convince a majority of the population that uranium should not be used for bombs or energy. This delegation was different, however, and was graciously entertained by three departmental chiefs in a suitably anonymous ministry building nestled in a back street only a stone's throw from the Dutch parliament. The four-man team consisted of one lieutenant colonel, two majors and a military chaplain, all members of the *Vredesen Veiligheidsberaad Krijgsmacht* (VVBK — Peace and Security Discussion Group in the Armed Forces).

Public concern in the Netherlands about the prospect of Pershing and Cruise missiles as



neighbours awoke a winter or two before it did in the UK and the ensuing debate spread to the illustrious pages of *Carré*, the monthly magazine of the Dutch Officers Association. The inevitably fierce army chaplain commented on the letters page that Christian nuclear pacifists were being misled by the forces of evil (communists), but his outburst so infuriated some Christians in the Dutch Armed Forces that one of them, Air Force Captain Meindert Stelling, chose to use the pages of *Carré* to express his own doubts about nuclear weapons. According to Captain Stelling, the use of nuclear weapons is ethically indefensible, and furthermore constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity. In this case, the individual soldier has not only the right, *but also the duty* to refuse to serve in a nuclear conflict.

Not all members of the VVBK are prepared to go as far as Meindert Stelling. Some only fear that the boundaries of acceptable and defensible conduct in war may be crossed, while some young conscripts are even refusing to guard American nuclear dumps. Many international bodies including the UN, Red Cross and International Law Association agree that existing bans on the use of poisonous weapons, on genocide and on attacks on non-combatants also exclude the use of nuclear weapons. In Holland the debate has now progressed so far that the government will probably be forced to prevent the stationing of the new mid-range missiles on Dutch territory. Even the Synod of the Reformed Church has backed demands from the Peace Movement to 'rid the world of nuclear weapons, starting with Holland'. It is this concentration on unilateral disarmament which distinguishes the nuclear pacifists in the Dutch army from their retired colleagues in Britain, France, Italy and the United States.

While the VVBK represents only a small group at present, the Dutch MoD is very worried by the results of a preliminary survey carried out last year in a number of military training establishments. The survey showed that half the army opposed the use of nuclear weapons. It revealed that 8 per cent of officers, 25 per cent of NCOs and no less than 65 per cent of conscripts would face a difficult moral dilemma if ordered to use nuclear weapons.

ALTHOUGH THE DUTCH parliament recently voted narrowly to reject calls for a full inquiry, the VVBK regards such a full scale survey as essential. The Dutch parliament and military command must be aware of the tensions in the forces caused by nuclear weapons, and by refusing an inquiry they are just sticking their heads in the sand. The problem can only be tackled if we have some idea of its scale. If a large body of officers and men is in two minds, then Holland will obviously have to take this into account in determining its defence policy. Lieutenant Colonel J. H. A. Mohr is not one of the hard liners and has stated his willingness to stay at his post after the first bomb has dropped, but he does think that a debate within the forces should be encouraged in peace time. 'We are first and foremost Dutch citizens, exposed to pressures and influences from the society around us, and only in the second place military personnel.'

Holland's Minister of Defence, Peiter de Geus was quick to express his irritation at the first signs of insubordination in the ranks and has suggested that such undesirable elements could better seek alternative employment. 'There is no room in the Dutch services for two categories of personnel — those who can and those who cannot be relied upon in time of war.' However, his blunt refusal to recognise the scale of the discussion has provoked widespread protests and has done nothing to reduce tensions within the forces, according to the discussion group. These uniformed nuclear pacifists would like to see the debate organised at a regional level and do not regard their activities as an expression of disloyalty. 'The guards can better be armed with a consciousness of what it is they are guarding.' Attitudes on both sides are clearly hardening, and the conscript who refuses to guard nukes can now expect to be court martialled, instead of being quietly transferred to less sensitive work.

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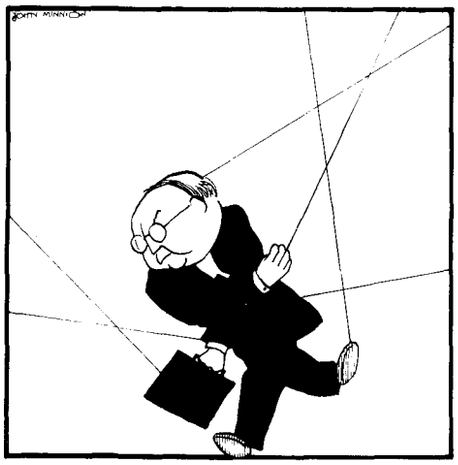
How the mandarins rule

In Whitehall, information is power. MICHAEL MEACHER MP, a former junior minister, reveals four ways in which officials manipulate information to keep their ministers at a disadvantage.



The rules of the game ploy

A strict routine is meticulously enforced. Any ministerial communication with the media, whether speech, broadcast or article, must be cleared with officials in the Minister's own department, then with officials and if necessary ministers in every other department which has an interest in any single part of the speech, and finally with No. 10 which will check that approval has been granted by all of the relevant departments concerned. The watering down effects of this process can clearly be considerable, as bargaining takes place over the nuances of words or phrases in order to get past each successive hurdle.

Officials will certainly sometimes interject views of a scarcely veiled political kind in this required clearance. For example, a ministerially written statement was to be put out from the Department of Industry which included the phrase 'anarchy of capitalist markets'. The Permanent Secretary, Sir Anthony Part, objected on the grounds that it was 'inappropriate for a minister to use phrases like this.' The Secretary of State referred him to the phrase 'the unacceptable face of capitalism' used by a Conservative Prime Minister. The Permanent Secretary said that was a matter for Heath. The Secretary of State insisted he approved the statement; the Permanent Secretary countered that he thought it would not be approved by Cabinet.

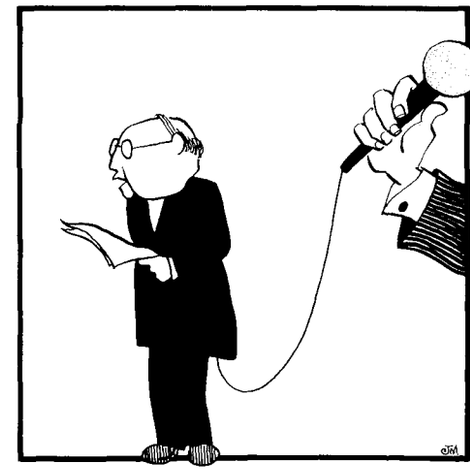
Questions of Procedure for Ministers, which is an elaborate manual 140 sections long of detailed dos and don'ts which every Minister is given on entering office to absorb, makes clear how closely restrictive are the rules for public utterances by ministers. Requests to ministers to appear on radio or TV feature programmes always have to be referred to the Chief Press Secretary at No. 10, and where an invitation is issued to a minister to appear in his private capacity, the Prime Minister's personal approval is required. Equally whenever a minister is asked to contribute to a book, journal or newspaper, the Prime Minister must be consulted if the article exceeds the strict confines of Departmental responsibility, which in practice is almost inevitable (the Treasury, for example, has a finger in virtually everything).

These rules stretch even to contributions to party political work. It is laid down that any contributions that involve material falling within another minister's departmental responsibility must first be referred to the minister concerned, which in practice often means being crawled over by that minister's officials, with advice to their minister to object or even to request withdrawal. This applies even to private unpublished party Committee papers. For instance, a minute was received in March 1976 from the Prime Minister's Principal Private Secretary forbidding the issuing of a paper to the Labour Party NEC Finance and Economic Affairs Committee on how taxes could be increased, without first securing the agreement of the Chancellor, Denis Healey.

Even beyond the extremely detailed and extensive rules laid down in these ubiquitous ministerial guidelines, Whitehall practice went further. When the question arose of ministers having a political existence governed by loyalty to the Party, the then Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, ruled that ministers could not speak publicly in a non-ministerial capacity, which meant in practice that everything they said should be vetted first by officials. And even when ministers ceased to minister, it was stipulated, following the Crossman memoirs episode, that any other memoirs by ministers must be handed over to the Cabinet Secretary to vet paragraph by paragraph, and in 1977 all ministers were forced to sign their concurrence with this edict.

The fait accompli ploy

Although ministers enter office with a Party Manifesto, the sheer vast range of political and administrative issues plus the ceaseless march of events very rapidly outdates and sidesteps the original set of political proposals. Ministers then become wholly dependent on policy papers put to them *after* they have been through thorough discussion in the official inter-departmental committees which are ultimately where the real power lies in Whitehall. Yet ministers not only do not have access to these committees — neither they nor junior ministers sit on them, nor do they see minutes of their proceedings (nor would they be shown them even if asked for) — but they also invariably are not consulted for a steer to guide these officials' deliberations at the start.



Similarly they lobby hard on the Whitehall network against any minister whose dissent is anticipated. Examples illustrating the way that civil servants expect their advice to be taken, and will go to considerable lengths to discredit ministerial inputs, include such specimens as the following extract from minutes: 'The Secretary of State (Edmund Dell) is advised to object to this proposal (which we understand was added at the last minute, and against all advice, by Mr. Cryer, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Industry)'; and 'Three ideas were floated by Dr. Owen, Foreign Secretary, (not, we understand, on official advice).'

What brought home this general point most forcibly was hearing a very senior civil servant, in the course of relaxed conversation with a journalist, refer repeatedly to ministers, without a trace of irony, as 'our P.R.men'. It is the same patronising and proprietorial attitude which led several civil servants in my experience, quite independently, to define a 'good minister' as 'one who listens to official advice and adjusts accordingly'. A wry example of this in reverse showed through in a *Times* editorial of 7 January 1975, complaining 'this underlines the difficult position that Mr. Benn appears to be creating for his officials through his current obsession with the preservation of employment.'

The expert advice ploy

Ministers are almost exclusively dependent on their civil servants for expert advice. Occasional generalised consultation of outside opinion on particular matters, or the help of two policy advisers similarly excluded from official committees, provides no escape from this dependence. And it is a dependence that is exploited.

Examples abound of how the civil service uses both political parties to put through its

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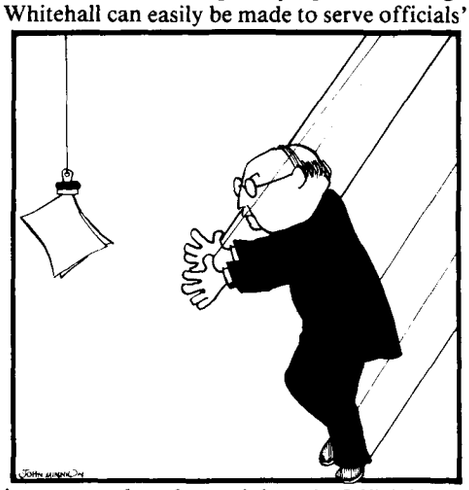
own ideas or those of the wider Establishment. Denis Healey's profit-sharing proposals in autumn 1977 bore an uncanny resemblance to the Tory tax preference schemes Labour earlier abolished in 1974. Crossman revealed that Keith Joseph's Family Income Supplement Bill of 1970 had been tried out earlier on him by DHSS. Labour's Criminal Law Bill of 1977 in no way originated from Labour sources. The Tory Protection of Official Information Bill of 1980 was curiously reminiscent of Labout ministerial speeches attacking passages of Clement Freud's Freedom of Information Bill of 1979. Officials are indeed adept at assessing their minister's readiness for them to feed in ideas that may have been long dormant in Whitehall files awaiting the most propitious moment for disclosure.

The timing of papers ploy

In some departments, notably the Treasury, the sheer unending press of urgent events, on which some public pronouncement must be quickly issued, makes acquiescence in the Departmental line put forward by officials almost irresistible. But apart from this practical necessity, there are many forms of more calculated pressure throughout Whitehall.

Since ministers only get to know perhaps some 1 per cent of what is going on in their departments, the selection and scheduling of this by officials becomes of key importance in determining a minister's agenda and reactions. Detailed position papers can be and usually are, delivered late, often the night before the decisive ministerial committee meeting, which makes in-depth reflection, or even reading and digesting, almost impossible. Such a procedure obviously opens the way to personal manipulation: 'He was causing trouble, so we put the papers in to him late', as was reliably reported about a ministerial colleague.

Or the channelling of proposals through Whitehall can easily be made to serve officials'



interests rather than ministers'. Officials can give it low priority in the departmental machine, or do no more than the decent minimum to give it a fair wind, or simply foot-drag in committee, or fail to take necessary initiatives themselves to promote the proposal, or signal to Whitehall colleagues indifference or even antagonism to the idea. In my own personal experience it took *a year* of *constant* chivvying and blocking of evasion in each case in order to get serious official examination of such controversial issues as the use of documentation as a restraint on imports, human rights and trade policy, the publication of expenses of members of public boards, and the licensing of air travel retail agents following a notorious collapse.

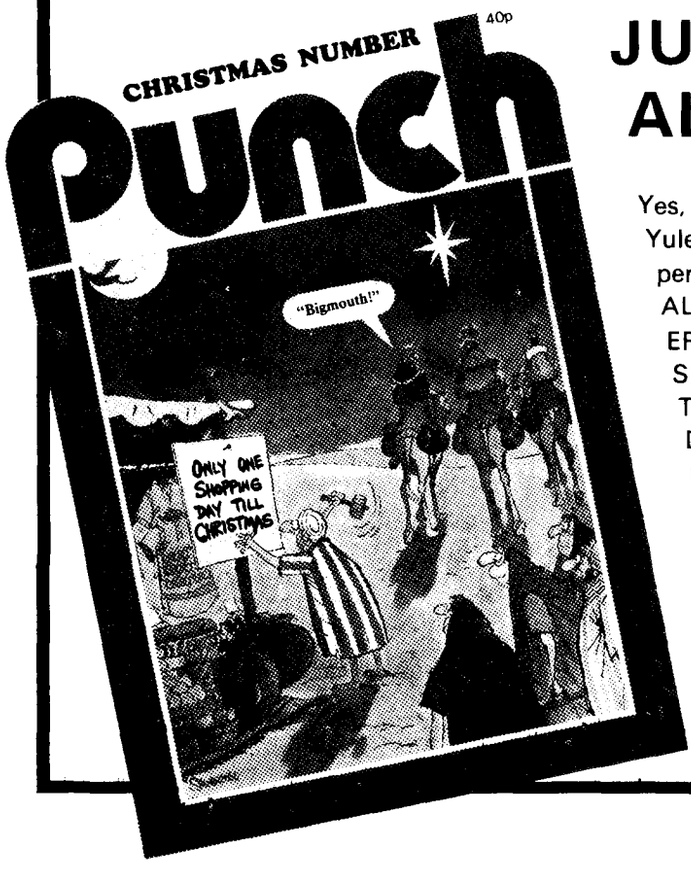
THESE POWER PLOYS deserve much more serious consideration if accountability of central government is to become a practical goal. In particular, reform of the Whitehall machine to prevent the consequences analysed here requires three specific major changes.

One is the passing of a Freedom of Information Act, since probably more than two-thirds of the paper passing round Whitehall, now kept concealed behind the walls of the Official Secrets Act, could be made publicly available without loss to national security, commercial confidentiality, individual privacy or any other valid reason for secrecy.

Secondly, there is the need to establish the right of ministers to remove or move sideways officials whose conduct has persistently shown them to be unsympathetic to the point of obstructiveness. At present, the civil service career structure is entirely in the hands of the civil servants. That should change, at least for the top three ranks of Under-Secretary and above, with ministers having the major say in appointments and promotions.

Thirdly, ministers should have the right to appoint, not just two political advisers from outside the department, but up to a dozen, who would be their own personal eyes and ears within the department, wit direct access to official files (which ministers lack), the right to sit on official department and inter-departmental committees, and the duty to act as progress chasers generally on the minister's behalf.

Otherwise, however much re-selection takes place in the political arena, the mandarins will still rule.



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OUT TODAY

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Orwell v Martin

From Paul Johnson

Your Mr Hitchens is beginning to suffer from an excess of moral self-righteousness, a disease to which young gentlemen of his age and opinions are peculiarly prone. Recently he published a violently censorious article on Michael Foot (*NS* 14 November) which was unfair to Mr Foot both as a writer and, more important, as a man. Last week he went for Kingsley Martin (*NS* 28 November), describing his conduct over the famous POUM articles as 'revolting'. He had a perfectly arguable case which he maintained to his dying day. Let me give it in his own words:

> I *minded* more about losing the war in Spain than about anything else that ever happened in my life . . . If the Republicans had won the situation would have been vastly different . . . The whole press was open to propaganda on the other side, it was almost entirely in the hands of anti-Republican propaganda. Both sides behaved with abominable cruelty; but I had to make my decision on general public grounds *to the end that one side might win rather than the other side.* I happened to like Orwell very much, and I would never have thought I wouldn't want to publish anything he wrote. But let me remind you: we didn't have *Homage to Catalonia* to publish — nothing balanced like that. We had two or three articles of violent anti-Negrin propaganda — and of course anti-Communist too. I would no more have thought of publishing *them* than of publishing an article by Goebbels during the war against Germany . . . In the Spanish Civil War I was very much alone, fighting the Republicans' battle in a very lonely way; and I didn't see it as my function to play the other side's game.

I will leave it to your readers to judge whether this attitude is 'revolting'. Nor was Martin, as Hitchens claims, a 'left-wing poseur'. He was a desperately serious man, who spent his whole adult life worrying about the state of the world. Finally, the anecdote about Orwell referring to Martin's 'corrupt face', often printed, we owe only to Malcolm Muggeridge, not a wholly objective witness since his own relations with Martin were, to put it mildly, complex. Martin in fact had rather a noble face. He was often tiresome and wrongheaded, but in all essentials he was a good and generous-hearted man.

Copthall, Iver, Bucks

Christopher Hitchens replies

Mr Johnson may be right about me, but he is quite wrong about Orwell. Bernard Crick's admirable book makes the sequence of events very plain. Orwell was invited to review Franz Borkenau's *Spanish Cockpit*. Kingsley Martin wrote to him, rejecting the finished work on the grounds that:

> It is very uncompromisingly said, and implies that our Spanish correspondents are all wrong. I should add that our reviewers are always left a good deal of latitude and there is free controversy in the correspondence columns, but it is no use publishing reviews that too directly contradict conclusions that have been carefully reached in the first part of the paper.

The Literary Editor of the time,Mr Raymond Mortimer, wrote a profuse letter of apology to Orwell when he learnt of this shabby piece of reasoning.

Of course, the world now knows that Fabian reticence on the shortcomings of the Popular Front did nothing to win the Spanish War. On the contrary, it helped stifle the combative elements on the Republican side, and lied about them when they were in their graves. As Mr Johnson says, the readers will find the right epithet for that.

He's wrong also about Orwell's general opinion of Martin. Muggeridge is *not* the only witness. Orwell called Martin 'a bloody fool' in a letter to Jack Common in October 1938, adding that he 'seems to think war is a cricket match'. Some years later Martin threatened to sue *Tribune* for something Orwell had written which, without mentioning him, had ended 'Once a whore, always a whore'.

Paul Johnson is one of Thatcher's leading blowhards. Kingsley Martin was a more complex figure, and cannot be captured in monochrome. But it is certain that Orwell disliked him, and with good reason. Mr Johnson should stick to defending Michael Foot, and generally dealing with people his own size. He is not the ideal man to rewrite the history of the *New Statesman*. I'm glad I never had to work under judgment like his.

Liverpool Liberals on race

From Rob Rohrer

David Alton, Edge Hill's Liberal MP, confesses he has never heard of a 'purpose-built, multi-racial comprehensive' (*NS* 28 November). This is puzzling, since he was briefly a governor of Liverpool's Paddington Comprehensive which his local party wants to close. But it might explain his miserable pre-occupation with bald statistics at a time when Paddington's present governors are pleading for more awareness of the racial harmony the school has achieved for its 450 pupils.

The MP complains I omitted to mention that Paddington has a capacity of 2,000 pupils. If he really wants to trade figures then he should know, firstly, that the school's absolute capacity is 1,920; secondly, that no one has ever seriously envisaged anything greater than a nine-form entry giving it about 1,600 pupils; and, thirdly, that slum clearance and a falling birth rate render all 'maximums' for inner-city schools completely meaningless.

For some years David Alton's election leaflets have harped on Paddington's unpopularity and crudely represented it as parents 'voting with their feet'. Portraying the Labour Party, of which I am not a member, as the bogey men who want to 'send your children to Paddington' has I suggest, certainly had the effect of exploiting the furtive racism of many Liverpool parents.

Recently, however, the Edge Hill MP wrote to his local newspaper saying: 'I totally refute the suggestion . . . that Edge Hill people are colour-prejudiced or racist.' Does he honestly believe that racism only finds expression through petrol bomb attacks, daubings and vicious wall stickers? As I'm sure David Alton knows, racism frequently manifests itself in subtler ways, such as preferring to keep a child away from a school with a substantial black population.

Unless the MP is suffering from a pronounced attack of naivety I can only suggest that his slogans about Paddington, and his talk of ghetto schools, have been shoddy attempts to gain electoral advantage by ignoring the racial prejudice in his constituency. In which case it is David Alton, not I, who is the slick propagandist.

New Statesman

Deadly freight

From J.W. Baker, Board Member, CEGB

Judith Cook's article (*NS* 14 November) contained a number of inaccuracies. 1) The CEGB will be applying for consent next year for one PWR station not two. However, we have made it clear that in time the Board will propose further to develop the Sizewell site. 2) No one is rushing a PWR into the site. The projected public enquiry will not start before mid-1982 and, if the go-ahead is given in 1983, the station could not be in operation before 1989. If this is a rush, heaven help the country if ever we need to be in a hurry!

3) PWRs are not 'beset with technical problems'. The PWR is a proven reactor built in greater numbers than any other reactor type. 4) Graham Searle's arithmetic only works well in a world where nothing wears out. In the real world, plant ages, becomes inefficient and has to be shut down. 5) Flasks loaded with irradiated fuel are not left unattended at the sidings near Sizewell. Your photograph shows a dummy flask made of wood. 6) If the cooling water escapes from a flask the heat in the fuel is not sufficient to raise the temperature of the Magnox cladding to its melting point, so it will not catch fire. In any event, it is unrealistic to suppose that after several hours no one will take action to cool or seal the flask. 7) No mechanism exists to enable all the active contents of a Magnox flask to release themselves immediately into the atmosphere as the fuel is a heavy metal, not a gas or a liquid. Consequently, graphic pictures of the supposed resulting devastation are on a par with hobgoblins invented to frighten children.

Any reader who wishes to form a view is invited to check the facts with us.

15 Newgate Street, London EC1

Christmas Appeal

From Abdul Minty, Hon. Sec. Anti-Apartheid Movement

May I again invite your readers to send Christmas and New Year greetings to the banned and banished as well as the families of political prisoners and detainees in South Africa and Namibia. For the hundreds of victims of apartheid's unjust laws such greetings are both welcomed and appreciated. Please write to us for a list of names and addresses, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope if possible.

89 Charlotte Street, London W1

In short

From C.H.M. Coutts, UK Sales Manager, Spenco

It has been brought to our attention that in an article by Paul Allen (*NS* 10 October) there is reference to the fact that there is not available, through the NHS, a brown-toned breast form for women who have had mastectomies. Spenco Medical produce a form with a brown skin tone and we would point out that the DHSS at Warbreck Hill, Blackpool, is aware of this breast form which is available through the NHS.

Tanyard Lane, Steyning, W. Sussex

From I.H. Johnson

Would you please desist from your recent practice of starting an article on one page and then continuing several pages later. In the *NS* of 14 November Christopher Hird's article starts on p. 9. It has a footnote reference in the first paragraph. One has to turn to p. 12 for the footnote, then back to p. 9, then back to p. 12 and then back to p. 10 to start the next article. We'll soon be needing a reader's guide to help find our way about.

3 Edgerton Road, Huddersfield

From Dr Paul Lax

The sub-title given to Rivka Fried's report (*NS* 21 November) on the Israeli television, 'Bad news for democracy in the Middle East', and your cover inscription, 'Israeli TV scandal', are dishonest. These titles imply that there is democracy all over the Middle East but that it is being substantially undermined in Israel alone. They hide the fact that all the regimes in the area (with the exception of Israel) are dictatorial.

20 Park Hill Road, Shortlands, Bromley, Kent

From Frank Partridge

Ever since Lord Chalfont tried, on *Panorama,* to prove that the Japanese defeat was due to their lack of nuclear weapons, I have heard the argument repeated by those who support the bomb as a deterrent. Can Lord Chalfont therefore explain why the Japanese still refuse to have nuclear weapons on their soil?

55 Kings Road, St Albans

From Peter Jones

In Scotland (see Rob Edwards's diary *NS* 14 November), the Procurator Fiscal merely prosecutes; he does not sit in judgment nor issue sentences. That is the job of the Sheriff.

Maxwelton, Strone, Dunoon, Argyll

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London Diary

☐Every lobby correspondent earned his salt last week by gravely applauding the statesmanlike remarks of Messrs Heath and Callaghan in the economy debate. In particular, there was a lot of solemn agreement and finger-wagging about the threat of 'social unrest' if unemployment continues at its present growth rate. I think it is dishonest for politicians, especially failed ex-Prime Ministers, to suggest that, while of course *they* would never condone violence, there just *could* be disorder if their pompous warnings are not heeded. In fact, the real danger is that unemployment will lead to apathy and despair; to the dismal resignation and waste which marked most of the inter-war period. We now look back with pride and sentiment on the few moments of resistance, but torpor and toadying were every bit as common. *That* would be far more worrying than a few riots and window-breakings. The real issue is this: the unemployed have been abandoned by most of the unions and by the employers. 'Respectable politicians' use them only to frighten their fellow-children. Will they have any thoughtful and serious friends if things do get rough? I can already hear the voices saying 'while I in no way condone, Mr Speaker, the latest . . .'

☐I had a brief conversation with Andreas Papandreou last week. He was visiting London in his capacity as leader of the opposition in Greece. By this time next year, say the bookmakers of Athens, he will probably be the Prime Minister. Since he was an exile six years ago, and a political prisoner seven years before that, it might not be an exaggeration to describe his rise as a 'dizzying' one. His party, the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), has a rather guarded relationship with Labour and with the Socialist International. Papandreou, along with most Greeks, cannot look on NATO with quite the same equanimity as the rest of us. It was, after all, NATO which supported the junta and NATO which colluded in the rape of Cyprus. Papandreou is a personal signatory of the European Nuclear Disarmament appeal, launched by Edward Thompson and others at the beginning of the year. He's under enormous pressure to compromise as the election approaches. But who knows? We might see non-aligned Eurosocialism starting in Athens.

☐I have admired James Cameron and his writing and broadcasting ever since I can remember. In particular, I have read him avidly on matters to do with India. I remember his spirited defence of Indian democracy against Mrs Gandhi, and his willingness to do battle for the best traditions of Congress. Then I read his review of Michael Foot's book in *Tribune*. He alludes to Foot's defence of Mrs G, and then exonerates it by saying that 'Michael Foot will never betray a friend.' I find this puzzling. Do we conclude that Mrs Gandhi was Foot's only Indian friend, and that he knew nobody in the vast and persecuted opposition? Or do we paraphrase Forster and say that, if faced with a choice between betraying his friends and betraying his principles, Foot hopes he would have the courage to betray his principles?

☐It is just ten years since Japan's most famous novelist, Yukio Mishima, committed hara-kiri after failing to provoke a military coup in Tokyo. His *Tatenokai,* or Shield Society, was dedicated to the abolition of Japan's pacific constitution, and to the restoration of the old samurai order. I thought of it while watching Kurosawa's amazingly beautiful film *Kagemusha*. It has a few hints of ancient chivalry (nodding plumes, streaming banners, fierce embraces, inconclusive engagements). But it also conveys a sense of deep gloom and permanent stagnation. And it is intermittently absurd. Mishima said of his last speech to the reluctant Japanese garrisons 'I came out on the stage intending to make the audience weep, but instead they burst out laughing.' I see what he must have meant. As well as being a raving fascist, Mishima was a homosexual. In his book *Forbidden Colours* he advances the view that homosexuals belong on the extreme Right because by their very nature they must be opposed to a majority rule. So the Gay Liberation movement has a more important task than some people will allow.

☐Last week the newspapers told us that two British citizens had been sentenced, by court martial, for kicking an elderly German caretaker to death in West Berlin. One of them was convicted of murder, the other of manslaughter. Apparently the caretaker had tried to stop them from vandalising street lamps outside his home. It was a military trial because both men had fathers stationed in the British army. Fair enough. Both had previous convictions and both will be returned to Britain to serve their time. Also fair enough. But why will the Foreign Office not ratify any transfer treaties for prisoners in much worse cases? There are a number of British citizens serving long and cruel sentences abroad, often in Turkey and the Middle East, with no common language or consular access to console them. The American government has just made a deal on repatriation of prisoners from Turkey, so that their sentences can be served out at home. If you feel that the British could do the same, you can get in touch with the National Council for the Welfare of Prisoners Abroad, at 1 Elgin Avenue London W9.

☐Labour used to give the Tories a hard time for assuming that they had 'a natural right to rule'. I sometimes wondered whether in the case of some Labour leaders, this was an expression of envy. At least the Tories had something worth coveting. To listen to the stalwarts of the Labour Right these days, you would think that a proud empire had, unbelievably, crumbled into dust. Take, if you can, Mr John Golding, the MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme. As we have pointed out in the past, he runs a tight ship in his constituency and has recently married a woman who serves as local party chairman, election agent and private secretary. His methods and conservative views have led to the emergence of political opposition. One of its leaders is Michael Tappin, a lecturer at the University of Keele. He does not seek the nomination himself, but does want a more open party and is supported by some prominent members of Golding's own union. Lately, Mr Tappin has had a lot of nasty, inconvenient and anonymous telephone calls. The newspapers have been silent. Imagine what the papers would say if a 'moderate' was being plagued in that fashion.

☐The scandalous occupation of Namibia by South African forces continues to be a mere blip on the Western crisis chart. The election of Ronald Reagan makes it even less likely that any serious 'pressure' will be brought to bear on Botha. But does that mean that the United Kingdom should continue to be so feeble? In the Waldheim report published late last month, there is an effective equation between the forces of SWAPO and the illegal troops of the Boer regime. Apparently, 'acute *mutual* distrust and lack of confidence' is 'one of the main obstacles to progress.' Namibia is the oldest issue on the international agenda. The British government among others is sworn and bound to help independence along. This won't happen if the aggressor and the victim are treated as if they were both equally irritating.

☐I once sat next to Shirley Williams at dinner, and like everybody else found her perfectly charming. I have always though it very ungallant of Denis Healey to say that just because her hair was in a mess it didn't mean she was an intellectual. In common with every other sensitive person in the nation, I have been on tenterhooks all week about her time of trial and decision. Kind friends write from abroad, telling of the huddles that form around remote wireless sets. Some report that appetite and sleep are affected, though I must say she has never taken me in quite that way. And then, suddenly, last Tuesday, I thought, sod it. We'll just have to do without her. And then, immediately, all kinds of improper thoughts came flooding in. What has she ever *done*? What is her legislative monument? Where is her great book or even pamphlet on the future of socialism? Why do the Tories love her so much? Why do people say that she commands millions of votes when she can't hold her own seat? I hope I may be forgiven for these impure reflections, but it has been terrible week.

We shall march prospering — not through her presence;
Songs may inspirit us — not from her lyre;
Deeds will be done — while she boasts her quiescence.
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire . . .

Christopher Hitchens

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ At last, a solution in a can for those owners of Range Rovers, and other fashionable four-wheel drive vehicles, who do not have time actually to get them out of London. A German company, aptly named Muhd, is marketing spray-on dirt to give the urban range rider a good, down-to-earth, ethnic image. — *Financial Times* (Lesley Duffy)

☐ Lord Lucan, the peer who disappeared six years ago after the death of his children's nursemaid, was refused his discharge from bankruptcy yesterday after the London Bankruptcy Court was told that he had not cooperated in any way with the official receiver. — *The Times* (V. Eves)

☐ 'If foxes have got to be controlled,' says Ronnie Wallace, 'if you took a Gallup poll of foxes I believe they would vote for being hunted rather than being gassed or shot.' I think I would myself. — Max Hastings in *Observer* (P.W.R. Foot)

☐ A schoolboy is being taken to court to establish whether he fathered a child at 13. If the court decides he did, he could be told to pay maintenance from his pocket money. — *Daily Express* (Sheila Burns)

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FIRST PERSON
Arthur Marshall

Silence is golden

Considering how deeply unfun-loving my Devon grandparents were, my mother really did very well merely to survive their influence, let alone to become such a whole-hearted enjoyer of almost anything that promised laughs and a merry approach to life. They were both, of course, Victorian and my grandfather was a clergyman. Repton and Trinity College, Cambridge had had charge of his education and each had plainly skimped its work and had missed out on the fun bits. My grandmother, as was then customary, followed him in everything and took her tone from him. She knew nothing of Women's Lib and would much have disapproved of it if she had. They were kind to me for, I suppose, my parents' sake but it was clear to me from an early age that they disapproved of my smiles and gurgles and shrieks. They suspected me, and quite rightly, of being frivolous and of giggling during family prayers, a daily event at which my Cousin Madge was usually present unless she could invent a cast-iron excuse for absenting herself from the devotions and she made it her business, when there, to make me laugh, never anything of a task. She squinted, she made moustaches out of pieces of her hair, she raised her eyes to heaven, she pretended to nod off, and I have loved her greatly ever since. Morning prayers were after breakfast, and breakfast, interminable like all their meals, was at 9 a.m. It was 10 before the last lesson had been read (on bad days my grandfather embellished the text with reflections of his own) and the last prayer had been said and we rose, absolved and shriven and gone in the knees, to our feet to find the best part of the morning vanished. If all these holy goings-on, coupled with ceaseless attendance at church, have been properly registered in my heavenly treasure-box, I shall be simply quids in later. Look out for me near the throne.

Particularly distasteful to my grandparents was my passionate love of the theatre and of entertainments in general. This, as everybody knew, was the road to hell fires and damnation. Once when they came to stay with us in London, I proudly displayed my model theatre and announced myself as being graciously ready to perform for them the first act of *Peter Pan*. I had acquired some smallish doll-like figures about three inches high and these I hoisted about on string during the flying episodes in the Darlings' nursery and although, after she had completed some rather daring aerobatics during rehearsals, Wendy's head had come off and she had done a belly-landing, her head had been stuck on again with Seccotine and she was quite ready to resume her role. But the invitation to this stimulating treat was not accepted ('Some other time, dear . . .').

My mother was able to throw some light on this profound disapproval of theatricals. In about 1907, my grandparents, staying with, of course, clerical friends in London, were taken, apparently without being consulted or given a chance to protest, to a performance of a popular farce called *When Knights Were Bold,* one of those side-splitters in which the main character goes to sleep and wakes up several centuries earlier. Ever conscientious in my researches on your behalf, I have before me the number of the 'Play Pictorial' which dealt at the time with this jolly piece and it is plain, from the photographs and snatches of dialogue, that it was a real stinker. The programme, reproduced, reveals that in Act I (called 'Forty Winks') we are in Beechwood Towers, home of Sir Guy de Vere, Bart, who drops off after dinner. Then '710 years pass backwards' and we are on the Beechwood battlements ('A Dream of ye Goode Olde Times'), with Sir Guy still in modern evening attire and surrounded by knights in armour yelling 'By my halidom' and 'Yield, caitiff, yield'. There are jokes ('When is yonder door not a door?'). There is a terrible jester in cap and bells who keeps banging people on the head with his bladder.

Having nothing at all to compare it with, it can hardly have been the absence of merit that so upset them. Possibly it was the jokes, but in the main it was, I suspect, the actresses flaunting themselves, either as the beautiful Lady Rowena Egginton or as the comical Kate Pottleberry. A Baronet is never to be sneezed at and in Act I the ladies, five in number, cluster round Sir Guy ('On me life, you're spoiling me!'). One of them was a tomboy and not averse to hauling up her skirts (it was, after all, the twentieth century) and displaying legs. Can my grandparents' reckless hosts have sat them, I wonder, in the stalls, Row B perhaps, with everything so terribly close and so visible? Wherever they were sitting, their shudders must have rattled the seats.

My grandfather was a good bit nicer and kinder than my grandmother and we were all very astonished when, one rainy winter's day in about 1922 at Ilfracombe, he volunteered to take us all to the cinema, a suggestion that so unnerved my grandmother that she pleaded a splitting headache and retired immediately to a darkened room. Neither of them had ever seen a film and the nearest that they had ever got to anything of that sort was an illustrated lecture, with magic lantern slides, of the Holy Land. Perhaps my grandfather thought that it would be the dear old Holy Land all over again but in movement, with camels sloping along the skyline and heavily draped ladies filling pitchers at wells. It was not.

The chosen film was called *Orphans of the Storm,* the storm in question being the French Revolution and the orphans of the title were portrayed by two great stars of the silent screen, Lillian and Dorothy Gish. I recall a moment when the two young girls, standing in a Paris *rue,* got splashed with mud by the wheels of the king's coach, symbolical you see of purity meeting its opposite and hinting at future events. Alas, the main outline of the plot now escapes me but once more my painstaking efforts in your interests have produced information, in this case snaps of the affair nestling in that book indispensable to all movie buffs, 'A Pictorial History of the Silent Screen' (Hamish Hamilton, 1954).

It is far from easy to tell from the photographs just exactly what is afoot. There are the sisters Gish just about to step into a coach obviously belonging to somebody of importance and drawn by eight horses (perhaps Louis had an eye for a pretty hitch-hiker and had given them a lift). There is Dorothy looking crestfallen in what seems to be a dungeon, while Lillian had obviously made it to the Court and, smothered in finery and with a large fan, is plainly just off to the Chelsea Arts Ball. There are crazed revolutionary sansculottes revolving like anything and waving scythes, and I do now remember a sensational last-minute rescue from the guillotine, with thrilling close-ups, still then an excitement, of distraught faces, the blade glittering ominously above, Miss Gish (L rather than D — perhaps she had been mistaken for an aristo and rightly so after all that dressing up) in apprehensive tears, and every now and then a cut to galloping horses bringing the reprieve. Would it come in time? But of course. The front rows of the cinema, filled with small boys, broke into tumultuous cheers and my grandfather sat frozen with horror throughout.

It is always fascinating to see a famous professional at work and, in the strange way that things in life sometimes turn out, the chance came for me to observe Lillian Gish at close quarters. Kindly invited to be in the Michael Parkinson telly show, I found to my extreme delight that this goddess, worshipped all those years ago, was also to be on the bill. Well into her eighties and still as pretty as a picture, she was in every way charming and entirely modest, not the most prominent attribute in some stars that I could name and we sat together while the first Parkinson guest was on, a distinguished film actor and director. We watched him on the TV monitor and Miss Gish at once sat up and clutched my arm. She was not happy about the way his face was lit, or not lit. 'No eyes!' she kept saying. 'No eyes. They haven't lit them enough. It's all in the eyes, you see.' And with memories of her own remarkably expressive eyes, staring in horror when she was trapped on that ice floe in *Way Down East* and drifting ever nearer to the dreaded rapids, one saw what she meant.

Roger Woddis

Nurse Moolish

who had an extraordinary way with patients

Nurse Moolish showed an Iron Will
In treating People who were Ill,
Assuring those who Shook their Heads,
'I have no time for Lie-abeds!'
Her Methods, hardly orthodox,
Were based on giving Short, Sharp Shocks,
And mixing Sturdy Discipline
With Draughts of Nasty Medicine.

One Patient, who was feeling Weak,
With Burning Eye and Pallid Cheek,
Was told to Rise from where he lay,
And soon the Pain would Go Away.
He cried, 'I cannot lift a Finger!'
She answered, 'Rubbish! Don't Malinger!
There is no Cure for your Disease,
Except to have you on your Knees!'

She shook his Leg and slapped his Wrist
(He was too feeble to resist),
And poured her Potion down his Throat,
To which there was no Antidote.
The more she Treated him, the more
He seemed to languish at Death's Door.
Nurse Moolish sighed, 'I've Done my Best —
He'll thank me when he's Laid to Rest!'

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CHRISTMAS BOOKS 2

From Grunwick to Gulag

Four recent books challenge the idea of human 'equality'. TED HONDERICH offers a critical examination of their assumptions and arguments.

On Justice by J. R. LUCAS *Oxford* £10
Illusions of Equality by DAVID E. COOPER *Routledge* £8.95
Equality by KEITH JOSEPH and JONATHAN SUMPTION *Murray* £4.95
The Recovery of Freedom by PAUL JOHNSON *Blackwell* £8.50

What distinguishes the Left from the Centre and the Right? What's common to 17th-century levellers, egalitarians like Tawney, democratic socialists, Marxist priests, assorted Communists, and the Baader-Meinhoff terrorists? Something about equality, but what does that come to? The authors of our four books tell us that talk of equality has been bumble and rot, and has had awful consequences, Grunwick to Gulag. The bumble and rot is itemised.

The first item is the idea that everybody ought to be treated equally in all respects. We are quickly led to see that this involves the absurdities that the sick are to be treated like the well, the criminal classes like the law-abiding, and that woolly scarves are to be knitted in wartime not only for our brave soldiers, sailors and airmen, but also for the agricultural workers. (This last is one of Mr Lucas's reflections, which have about them a touch of the insular past.)

A second item in thought on equality, we learn, is the principle that everybody's life should be equal in satisfaction to everybody else's. Everybody at the same point on the happiness scale, everybody with the same positive or negative number of benthams per lifetime. But that involves the mistake that it would be better to have everybody in equal distress as against everybody in good shape although unequally so.

The same sort of irrationality is said to turn up with a third piece of egalitarianism, that we should go in not for any old equality of well-being, but an equality of it at the highest possible level. And anyway, to produce *any* equality is thereby to produce an inequality. Tax people progressively, for example, making them more equal in the amount of income they have left, and you thereby make them more unequal in the percentage of income they have left. (This is from Mr Cooper's supply of logical points, each perfectly formed but small.)

Item No 4 in the muddle is going in for equality of opportunity with the idea that somehow it will lead to an equal society. It doesn't, since individuals have different capacities. Sir Keith Joseph and Mr Sumption remind us that an equal opportunity of founding Morris Motors was had by all Englishmen. One of them took it, and we all know the result. Anyway, they say, the main fact in this neighbourhood is that being born into adversity can be a boon. No surprise that the founder of Morris Motors, who started as a humble bicycle-repairer, didn't do quite as well as John D. Rockefeller, whose mother used regularly to tie him to a post and beat him.

Skipping other egalitarian confusions fastened upon by our authors, we come to a last item, treated a touch more tolerantly. John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* recommends three principles, the earlier to override the later when they conflict. (1) A society must have the largest possible body of personal 'liberties' consistent with an equal share-out. (2) There must be equal opportunity to be on the happy end of any socio-economic inequalities that exist. (3) The society must have exactly those socio-economic inequalities — none or few or many, small or large or immense — which have a certain effect: they make any worst-off group in socio-economic terms better off than it would be without the inequalities.

Rawls seems to presume there is a need for many large inequalities, acting as incentives, to secure the goal of the third principle. The rich need to be about as rich as they are so that the poor are not poorer. That is one reason why our authors are more tolerant of him. Another is a certain vagueness on his part. What are the 'liberties' which must always limit activities in support of his second and third principles? Mr Johnson says fundamental liberties were infringed by setting up the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) and by allowing income-tax inspectors a right of entry and search in connection with tax evasion.

It would have been a standing miracle if the Left had been unlike the entire remainder of humanity and hence never strayed into confusion, contradiction, stupidity and worse. This is not to allow that there is cogency or proper understanding in all the above objections and revelations by our several authors. (Some ways in which they take Rawls to go astray will be noticed below.) There are two more important issues. Is the critical survey of egalitarian thinking, Rawls included, complete? Does it, or anything in it, actually define the Left? Not on your nelly is the answer to both questions.

What was omitted and what does define the Left is the Principle of Equality. *We should have certain policies which have the goal of making well-off in life-experience those who are badly-off.*

Many of these policies are for the equal distribution of goods and powers. They are for transferring means to well-being from the well-off to the badly-off. Other policies, of a compensatory kind, are for unequal and greater opportunity for those who need it. Another policy is for reducing the need for certain favourable inequalities, incentives, which do improve the lot of the badly-off. The general definition of all the policies is that they serve the given goal: altering for the better the lives of those who are hungry, bound by poverty, denigrated, variously unfree.

The principle is a general one, and there are competing and conflicting ways of making it particular. These will differ, first, in their specific definitions of the badly-off. A part of one country or of the human race? What line between the badly-off and the remainder? Secondly, exactly what policies are to be accepted as rational means to the given goal? For a start, bombs or votes? The answers to such questions distinguish the parties and movements of the Left.

The Principle of Equality is a source of much bad conscience, and hence often overlooked. All our authors, in considering the moral and political past, are inclined to find in it two groups: purveyors of bumble and rot, of which we know, and the humanitarians. The humanitarians were for the alleviation of distress, principally by charity. This dividing up of the past makes life agreeable. One *must* avoid the confusions of the purveyors. And one can side with the humanitarian angels without noticeable strain, since the demands of charity are always bearable. This view of the past, however, entirely misconceives the first group, the parties of the Left. They have had a perfectly coherent principle, the Principle of Equality, and hence a commitment not only to the humanitarian end but to effective means of moving towards it.

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Some of our authors' objections to Rawls also apply to the Principle of Equality. Mr Lucas offers a ramified account of the opposed thing somehow written in all our hearts, eternal justice. It consists in every man's having his due, which is a matter of his desert, agreements made, need, status, entitlement, and rank. The general upshot for our conduct is not large. Whatever charity we may go in for, justice requires that one man's need somehow counts for only as much as, and perhaps less than, another's desert, agreements or whatever. Hunger, oppression and unemployment are somehow on a level with rank. We must have a care, as Mr Lucas says, for the plight of the overdog. He argues admirably and with much scholarship — certainly the best book of the four. He does not at all convince me that need does not give rise to a moral obligation above all others.

Two of Mr Cooper's orderly objections, if they are generalised beyond education, which is his main concern, are that the badly-off have no greater desert than anyone else, and that they have not been cheated. He apparently would not consider that distress itself is the principal moral premise for action. He is rightly dismissive of a certain amount of modish stuff in the recent philosophy of education. He is moved to conclude that for working-class children above all 'the main job of schooling . . . should not be to educate them'. They cannot appreciate 'the better cultural products'.

Sir Keith and Mr Sumption appear to wish to be taken seriously when they announce that they are 'objective and logical' and that those who disagree, the victims of the 'the cake-sharing mentality', are 'emotional and subjective'. A good move on their part in the direction of logic would have been primitive consistency. One must avoid saying on p.4, in order to discomfit one's opponent, that 'nothing is self-evident', and then discovering on p.11 that it is 'self-evidently untrue . . . that inequality "is against nature" '. One must avoid saying on p.48 that 'how much money we have is one of the factors which determines the choices open to us' and on p.49 that someone who cannot afford to buy food does not lack any significant freedom.

They do better and indeed well with the theme that the cake to be shared among us does not fall from heaven. They are absolutely stunning, given that the first is in government over us, when they report on the poor in this country. Those who can eat, but 'cannot afford endless smokes', are enjoying 'a standard of living equal to that of a mediaeval baron'. The intent of this is not obscured by the dotty addition that the great majority of us now live like mediaeval kings. Still, they certainly resist the temptation of the rousing finale. Their last words are that if we do not overcome the egalitarians, 'the fault will be in ourselves, not in our stars'.

Mr Johnson's book has mainly to do with the awful consequences, Grunwick to Gulag, of the bumble and rot about equality. There is now a small hope, he feels, that the institutions, parties and practices of the Left will be defeated, freedom recovered, and the fourth Dark Age averted.

He aims at the magisterial, and mainly achieves rant. The gruesome cronies leading the zombie unions; the contemptible Labour Party; the miners' club selling its books to make way for strip shows; the new slum universities; the cynical *Guardian;* the Frankenstein state; the Marxist-Fascists and their Hitler-recruits are subjected to repeated rapes and are forced to take part in communal acts of sexual depravity to anaesthetise their moral reflexes'; the aeons of misery and oceans of blood; the hyper-inflation of language by the Know-Nothing Left. On the other side are those who are not unobservant fools or place-seekers, and hence move Rightward in politics; also the goodly liberal Shah, and the greatest single blessing ever bestowed on humanity, capitalism, by whose rise ordinary people first acquired family names.

Mr Johnson reports that he first heard the word 'Quango' at a political conference in Australia, and, finding it a useful term, brought it back to Britain for our general use. Can this be his most significant contribution to political theory? Probably not, but I had that unkind idea on finishing his book, which is more of a challenge to one's good temper than anything else.

David Benedictus

Satellites

Broadcasting in a Free Society by LORD WINDLESHAM *Blackwell* £7.95

Lord Windlesham's book, which reads as though it has been dictated to the last secretary in the pool after one too many helpings of steak and kidney pudding, is nevertheless of the greatest importance to us all. He begins by reminding us that we are exceptional in enjoying a broadcasting service (supposedly) independent of political interference just as we are fortunate in inheriting a press which is (supposedly) free. He points out that a couple of years back a UNESCO Commission produced a declaration which accepted as fundamental that it was for governments to rule what was true and what was erroneous and that controls on the press were justified as a means of achieving political, economic, or social objectives. But, as Arthur Schlesinger Jr., put it succinctly, 'Democracy is not something to be suspended in an emergency'.

The second chapter is sad. For here we have yet again, and in emetic prose, the story of Lord Reith's brave struggle to save us from ourselves. I think, in passing, that too much emphasis has been here and elsewhere laid on Reith's high principles and too little on his low cunning. The good lord's evangelical fervour was tempered by a shrewd knowledge of how thickly his bread was buttered and on which side — witness his sycophancy towards Baldwin during the 1926 General Strike. Nonetheless the present apartheid of current radio programming makes it impossible that the pop fan will learn to love Schoenberg, or the classicist come bopping out of his ivory tower to the music of the Boomtown Rats.

The history of television is characterised by the entrance of Sir Hugh Greene on to the stage, as vital an entrance as Captain Spaulding's in 'Animal Crackers', and also by the appointment in 1967 of Charles Hill to be Chairman of the Governors. This was, in the words of one executive, as if Rommel had been appointed to command the Eighth Army, and marked a transfer of real and apparent power from Director Generals to Chairmen of Governors — from, one could argue, activists to apparatchiks.

Windlesham goes on to chart the history of competition between the BBC and ITV and to identify those who saw the emergence of commercial television as the end of all that made life worth living (Herbert Morrison, Christopher Mayhew, Lady Violet Bonham Carter et al.) while others, notably Selwyn Lloyd, could see no reason why viewers should be denied programmes which they enjoyed. Writing in the pages of the *New Statesman* in 1961 A.J.P. Taylor commented: 'To this day, the high-minded defenders of the BBC monopoly do not understand what hit them.'

Once ITV was established Windlesham notes a subtle shift of emphasis within the BBC from public service idealism to 'the new God of professionalism' — a subtle shift which amounted and amounts to an unnecessary compulsion to compete for audiences.

On the way in which pirate radio stations forced the BBC to consider the young, and on the vital public service nature of local independent radio (especially when it snows) Lord Windlesham is unexceptionable, but it is when he comes to deal with future developments in broadcasting that he pins the tail precisely where it belongs on the donkey. For the truth is that, where satellite broadcasting is concerned, Britain has been lamentably slow. The Annan Report, which dismissed future technology in three complacent paragraphs, must share the blame. But France and Germany have invested in their own satellite while we have remained subject to the cumbersome processes of the European Space Agency. By the time our investment of £40m (to date) produces any visible results, even Radio-Tele Luxembourg will have its own highly profitable service operating on all cylinders (do satellites use cylinders?). Not good enough, says Windlesham.

Furthermore this new technology with its cable-vision and its video-discs and all the rest of the paraphernalia is going to mean that Britain's broadcasting authorities will no longer have control over the programmes beamed to British receivers. We can expect political propaganda, unacceptable levels of violence and sexual hi-jinks. (I know which I'd prefer.) Massive audience defection from the BBC and the commercial companies is likely to follow. The IBA will no longer be able to finance one channel, let alone two, and the BBC will become a public service system merely to 'maintain a national voice', with all the inherent dangers of political interference which that implies.

Lord Windlesham, who has a talent for stating the obvious at some length (see, notably, page 85, line 7 onwards), here concludes: 'The final chapter in the history of broadcasting has begun. Who can say when or how it will end?'

The book is padded out with UNESCO's Declaration of Fundamental Principles on the Mass Media, and the ITV Code on Violence, which is honourable and concise, though the last four words are alarmingly abrupt ('If in doubt, cut'). The Appendices help to justify the price of the book — £7.95 for 149 pages of original text, but if Lord Windlesham's warnings about the future lead to speedy and determined initiatives, £7.95 will seem like the greatest bargain since the Americans purchased Alaska.

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Narrative poetry never had it so good as in the 19th century. In the 20th its popularity has decreased considerably — with a few shining exceptions to prove the rule. For one thing its potential audience has been distracted by alternative entertainments. For another, the modernists severely reduced confidence in the poetic tradition of 'realistic' story-telling. Interestingly, large numbers of English novelists have continued to produce work which conforms broadly to Victorian examples. English poets, though, in the last 50-odd years have often been driven to concentrate on lyrics at the expense of narratives.

In the last few years there have been signs that this trend is being reversed. As the influence of post-modernists has filtered into England from America, and as a new generation of English writers has become articulate, a strong pleasure in poetic fictionalising has reasserted itself. This hasn't necessarily meant a full-scale revival of the narrative tradition, but a more self-conscious form of story-telling.

In a verse Epistle to James Fenton, John Fuller once wrote: 'Poets hate to have directives:/They're on their own, not on collectives', but in spite of this assertion and although strictly speaking he belongs to an older poetic generation, Fuller's own work is also pre-occupied with various kinds of serious playfulness. His last collection, *Lies and Secrets*, illustrated and analysed it on almost every page, and in *The Illusionists* the same themes are writ even larger. The new book is a nine-part verse tale written in the stanza Pushkin invented for *Eugene Onegin*, and its ostensible narrative purpose is to follow the career of a young Camford graduate, Tim, once he has left university to work in a London art gallery. Here his ideals undergo a sustained assault — first as he competes with his colleague Nico for the attentions of a society belle called Polly Passenger, and latterly as he becomes unwittingly involved in the sale of a fake Hogarth. Eventually the painting's true nature is exposed, Polly is revealed as a man, and Tim's romantic illusions are shattered. It's a conclusion reached by comic ends to serve a high moral purpose, and as in all Fuller's poems the elegance and humour co-exist with a profound and restless melancholy.

The poem's most striking gravities and comedies are emphasised by another more hidden subject: its own creation. Fuller

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repeatedly parallels the duplicity of his characters with his own inventiveness — and thereby suggests that the supreme illusion is to suppose omniscience in any form:

> My characters have not been taught to
> Accept me as a hanger on.
> They hide their thoughts from me, refusing
> To share their hopes or be amusing,
> They change their minds or disappear,
> Or turn out not to be sincere.

The Illusionists is at its most fascinating when Fuller allows his subjects to comment on one another in this way. It is a rapprochement which enables him to include — among various other things — virtuoso literary games, and lengthy digressions, without jeopardising his structure. How can digressions be considered as such, when the poem is written about itself?

There are, however, indications that Fuller's faith in this process does not stay the whole course of his poem. The abundant self-deprecations ('if this chapter feints or lingers . . .', 'When will we get back to the point . . .?') do not always seem designed to make a virtue of free fictionalising, but to apologise for formlessness. And their modesties open a gap between traditional narrative methods and post-modernist ones, in which questions quickly spring up. Why should Tim sink so far and fast from sight? Why should the language sometimes be allowed to slacken? Why should some unimportant characters get pages of description while some important ones get almost none? These and other questions insist on emerging throughout the poem — and in the end they guarantee that, instead of achieving a kind of deceitful unity, it exists as a series of funny, sad, brilliant fragments.

Anthony Thwaite has a much more respectful attitude to traditional narrative forms — and, it's tempting to feel, to the past as well. His most successful poems ('Mr Cowper', 'Monologue in the Valley of the Kings') have invariably reported incidents with an unwavering need to establish absolute sequence and authenticity. This has sometimes led to a lack of numinousness, but it's ensured that his books have performed a sort of scrupulous archaeology on their subjects.

Victorian Voices is an ambitious extension of the same technique — its 14 monologues are all earnest and absorbing accounts of 19th-century lives, and they have none of *The Illusionists'* playfulness. This isn't to imply that Thwaite's speakers lack self-consciousness. They're brimming with it, but for very different and revealing reasons. Thwaite uses time-honoured narrative modes with strict confidence; that is to say, his characters don't 'hide' from him like Fuller's, but are fixed in the incidents which make up their lives. And because many of these are obscure, Thwaite has to remind us of their details — with the result that a tone of defensive self-justification is often adopted. Occasionally this introduces a rather fusty, researched quality into the poems. In a number of instances, though, Thwaite skilfully uses it to suggest a nagging, reminiscent cast of mind — in the 'peevish' explorer Isabella Bird, for instance, or in John Churton Collins recalling his attack on Edmund Gosse's Clark Lectures:

> To say so in the *Quarterly Review*
> Was — surely? — a good office, what a straight
> Purposive fellow ought to say, in truth:
> No personal attack — here was a book
> (All pasted up for lectures) which was gross
> With slovenly facts, deplorable and low . . .

It's not easy to do justice to *Victorian Voices* by giving short quotations, but as this extract suggests, the book's strengths lie in its grasp and deployment of circumstantial detail, and in its revelations of character by cadence. Much the same is true of *A Night in the Gazebo,* but where Thwaite's narratives seek to restore the past, Brownjohn's tend to create fictions of contemporary life. Thwaite's poems are histories, Brownjohn's are fables, and usually confine themselves to a 'world of carefully-defined/Limits and chances'. 'Representational' is a good example: the speaker's observations cluster to produce a low-keyed implicit narrative, but convey a considerable amount of uncertainty about their own significance:

> His mother
> Is flushed and laughing with the man, there they are
> In the great wall mirror on the far side of the room,
> Laughing and flushed the two of them, the freer selves
> They could always be if this were only art
> — Oh, if this were only art, or even fiction! But still,
> Small rewards and mercies hold good . . .

'Fiction' is of course precisely what it is, but Brownjohn clearly regrets his inability to adopt a more expansive style. In many respects the poem, and others like it in the book, recalls the points Alvarez levelled against Larkin in his assault on 'gentility'. Brownjohn's sense of 'How things ought to be' is distinctly Larkinian, particularly his belief that love can, in theory at least, solve and satisfy and set unchangeably in order. But as poems like 'A Night in the Gazebo' itself and 'The Green Cat' illustrate, its pursuit is invariably vain.

Like Brownjohn, Jeremy Hooker relies for many of his poetic coups on close observation of the — predominantly rural — world around him. In his last book, *Solent Shore,* his perceptions were often crossed on one another to produce spare glancing narratives in which he enacted a search for harmony between himself and the landscape near Southampton. His new collection, *Englishman's Road,* continues the process — over the same ground in the first part, and then in Wales, where he has lived for the last 15 years. In certain respects the change of place seems to have had a deleterious effect on his talent. A sense of isolation from the Welsh language and from the country itself (Wales has, he says, 'A silence harder than the rock/To break and deeper than the snow') has prompted him to resort to pomposity as he presses his claim for integration:

> And I who desired
> eyes washed clean
> as melting snow,
> radiant at the point of fall,
> know that every word obscures
> the one I want to know.

One way Hooker might find 'the' word is by bringing himself to act on an ambition shared by Peter Jay, who says, 'I would like words to be/clean as this life,/free as the water,/strong as the earth'. It's an admirable aim, and one which *Shifting Frontiers* (really a Selected Poems, rather than a collection) evolves gradually and painstakingly. The trouble is, Jay's sense of a subject is much less arresting than Hooker's — whose poems, for all their irritating aspects, sincerely grapple with a serious theme.

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Wars of Position & Manoeuvre

MARTIN SHAW examines the relevance of Gramsci's theory to modern socialists

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Gramsci's Politics by ANNE SHOWSTACK SASSOON *Croom Helm* £12.95 & £5.95
Marxism and Democracy edited by Alan Hunt *Lawrence & Wishart* £7.95 & £3.50

The successes of the Labour left during the last 18 months have revived an old argument on the left: is socialism possible by parliamentary means? The more the left actually wins the battle within the party, the more attention must focus on its strategy for winning the larger battle to transform society.

Whether anyone will turn for guidance to the academic debate about the Italian marxist Antonio Gramsci must remain doubtful. Like most previous commentaries, none of these books is inviting to the uninitiated, and the most thoughtful of them, Buci-Glucksmann's, is a very intricate work. Yet the discussion hinges very much on the issues which preoccupy the political left, and it is widely believed that Gramsci has a central contribution to make to current concerns.

Gramsci, the leader of Italian Communism who died in 1937 after 10 years in Fascist gaols, was a classical revolutionary. He enthusiastically welcomed the Russian Revolution, and led attempts to set up workers councils, similar to the Russian soviets, in Turin after the first world war. And yet today he is acclaimed as a patron saint not only by revolutionaries, but also by Eurocommunists.

Gramsci believed to the end in the revolutionary marxist idea that the existing, capitalist state was a thoroughly repressive institution. He never envisaged a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism. Indeed, how could he? The experience of his own time was that democracy gave way to dictatorship. The Italian state, Buci-Glucksmann makes clear, 'had never been liberal in the classical sense of the term'. After the brief revolutionary upsurge, it fell quickly to Fascism.

Gramsci had no crystal ball in which to see the post-1945 revival of parliamentary democracy. He believed that this system was in crisis, and that the historic alternative to Fascism was 'the development by the working class of a new type of social-political control, rooted in production' (Showstack Sassoon). Gramsci still held to this idea, based on the experience of the Turin factory councils, when he came to write his prison notebooks of the early 1930s.

The notebooks are a labyrinth of ideas, often obliquely expressed, and here the dispute about the interpretation of Gramsci really begins. His key concept is 'hegemony', by which he means the moral and intellectual supremacy of a social class, exercised through a network of institutions in society. Gramsci argues that each dominant social class rules not merely through the coercive powers of the state, but through its hegemonic control. A rising social class must create its own hegemony if it is ever to challenge for power.

Gramsci's argument is often confused with the narrower claims made by other marxists for 'ideologies', class-based sets of ideas which influence our lives through various media. Hegemony, he believes, is a matter of practical arrangements in every sphere of life, not just the activities of professional ideologists. 'Hegemony is born in the factory and requires for its exercise only a minute quantity of professional political and ideological intermediaries', Buci-Glucksmann quotes. Such intermediaries, whom Gramsci calls the 'organic intellectuals' of the dominant class, only articulate the ideas which are involved in practical processes such as management, policing, and family life.

It is often supposed that Gramsci was elaborating the subtle ways in which a ruling class rules in a liberal democracy. In fact — and it is one of the strengths of Buci-Glucksmann that she makes this clear — Gramsci was mainly concerned with Fascism. He was interested less in its repressive violence than in its corporate side, seeing it as a 'hegemonic' solution to the crisis of Italian society. He understood the way in which it had mobilised a mass movement, utilised values, and reorganised society.

Fascism was one type of the modern state, which Gramsci calls the 'integral state', or 'hegemony protected by the armour of coercion'. Other examples which Gramsci discussed were the police, which he saw as a means of control as well as overt repression, and the sexual regulation of the workforce experimented with by Henry Ford in his American car factories.

These modern forms of ruling class hegemony required, according to Gramsci, a new kind of socialist response. In highly abstract and hence much-debated passages, Gramsci suggests a contrast between two kinds of socialist strategy. On the one hand there is 'war of manoeuvre', open and direct revolutionary action, leading straight to an assault on the state. While some interpreters have argued that this is applicable to struggle against highly repressive regimes, Buci-Glucksmann convincingly argues that this strategy 'corresponded to the liberal economic system, to free competition'. Only in the early phase of capitalism, before the development of modern hegemony and the 'integral state', was such direct assault possible.

The other strategy, 'war of position', is analagous to the trench warfare of the first world war, and is the method applicable to class struggle under modern conditions. The proletariat must gradually establish its hegemony by a series of skirmishes, occupying what ground it can, within a highly repressive and manipulative society.

This elusive conceptual polarisation has been fertile ground for what are known in current jargon as divergent 'readings' of Gramsci. Eurocommunists have interpreted the gradualism implicit in a 'war of position' as a prescription for a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism. Versions of this, based on expanding democracy in society at large as well as in parliament, are presented by Alan Hunt and some of his collaborators in *Marxism and Democracy*.

Critics of Eurocommunism, who implicitly include Buci-Glucksmann and Showstack Sassoon in the 'readings' under review, emphasise

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Gramsci's belief in the crisis of parliamentary democracy. Buci-Glucksmann shows how the 'war of position' concept derives from the tactics of the 'united front' — developed by Lenin and Trotsky in the 1920s when it became clear that revolution in the West would become a slow and involved process. The logic of this interpretation is that Gramsci was developing an abstract strategic conception of socialist struggle in Western capitalism — but still based on revolutionary lines.

The debate quickly becomes scholastic, and a major part of the problem is the failure to see clearly the difference betwen Gramsci's time and ours. When Alan Hunt argues for 'Taking Democracy Seriously', he is right, of course, but not particularly Gramscian.

What Gramsci has to say about democracy is chiefly by implication. A socialist working-class 'hegemony' is not, for Gramsci, something imposed from outside — as in the most mechanical versions of Lenin — but something created, organically (to use his favourite word) out of working-class struggle. It therefore implies direct democracy along the lines of the Turin councils.

Showstack Sassoon, in a thoughtful and reliable study, explores the possible tension between this democratic implication and Gramsci's belief in the 'organic unity' of the party. However, in her commitment to understanding the coherence of his thought she underestimates the tendency for 'unity', organic or otherwise, to be used against democracy within communist parties and groups. Gramsci did not see, and arguably could not have seen, the extent of this problem.

Modern parliamentary democracy is an even bigger problem for contemporary Gramscians. The 'expansion of the state', in all the subtle and not-so-subtle ways indicated by Gramsci, is still the key issue. We have not got the 'integral state' in the full sense: there is room for contestation, through the parliamentary system and even more outside it. But this space is closely limited, not just by the formal characteristics of parliament, law and so on, which Hunt sees, but by the power the machine has acquired. The most striking case of this is the machinery of warfare, which gets curiously little consideration in most marxist theories of the state.

If the basic idea of a struggle for hegemony is still attractive, the practical implications are far from clear. We may agree with Hunt that parliamentary democracy and direct, popular democracy should not be wholly counterposed in socialist thought. But when parliament is so manifestly weak in the face of the machine, and extra-parliamentary workers' activity is also in decline, what conclusions do we draw?

Marxism and Democracy is suffused with the romantic optimism of expanding socialist hegemony, in which Gramsci's concepts seem to have closed off the realities. Only Stuart Hall's paper really leaves the abstract and ahistorical treatment of democracy to concentrate on today's concerns.

Hall sees Gramsci not as the source of a timeless strategy but a source of concepts such as 'organic crisis' with which to analyse our situation today. 'Authoritarian populism,' he argues, is a hegemonic solution to our crisis, as Fascism was in the interwar years. This new right has itself 'taken democracy seriously'. Hall's analysis reminds us that unless we understand the enemy's power, hope of socialist advance is little more than a dream.

Fiction — 1

Paul Binding

North of South

Morgan's Passing by ANNE TYLER *Chatto* £6.50

The Southern writer has always enjoyed an intimate relationship to Southern rural life. The South's most famous literary movement, the Nashville Fugitives, celebrated the traditions of their countryside as a necessary corrective to the corrosive commercialism of the rest of America; Faulkner and Wolfe were able to give such Atrean dimensions to their haunted, passionate characters because able to move them through a world largely isolated from the strains and trivia of sophistication.

Anne Tyler, however, the most spectacularly gifted of Southern writers still under 40, and in America the most applauded, breaks this pattern; she has been called the first urban Southern novelist, and rightly, particularly if by this we do not just mean that her last novels are set in a large city. For those earlier novels of hers, taking us to the North Carolina countryside of her youth, would still legitimately earn her this title. Her characters listen to, indeed perform pop music, start up small businesses striving for metropolitan markets, are interested in the latest gadgets or food-products, watch TV and avidly read newspapers, are in other words very far from suspended from contemporary America.

Anny Tyler is a Southern writer, though, in her interests and emphases — in her concern with the large, ramified family, in her social inclusiveness (reflecting the still comparatively cohesive nature of Southern society), in her use of gossip, particularly the 'tall story', as a way of learning about people and their worlds, in her concern with the eccentric, obsessive person. Her work is distinguished by a joyous, mostly non-ironic humour, by a remarkable (and for me Southern) tenderness in her depiction of the relations between men and women, by a mediumistic sense of place. Perhaps her two finest books are *A Slipping Down Life* (1970) about a fat girl's infatuation with and marriage to a maverick pop singer and *Earthly Possessions* (1977).

Morgan's Passing could certainly be the work of no other author. At its very centre is a character of Gargantuan eccentricity, Morgan Gower, manager of a hardware store, ever in search of more interesting personae for himself, which his considerable histrionic powers enable him — temporarily at least — to assume to the world when away from his restrictingly large family. No less important to the novel are a young couple, professional puppeteers, Leon and Emily Meredith, whose relationship — though it is to go wrong — is once again delineated with a moving warmth, a lyric sense of the joys and frustrations of

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daily shared living. Like her other recent novels *Morgan's Passing* takes place in a beautifully realised Baltimore, a city Southern in its atmosphere, its social composition and its history (it was pro-Confederate), but set in a Northern state, an apt milieu for this novelist who marries old Southern obsessions to acute awareness of contemporary American life.

The opening scene of the book is brilliant and arresting. A public puppet-show is interrupted by a sudden cry from the invisible female manipulator; labour has begun for Emily, and her husband bemusedly reveals himself to the audience, to ask if there is a doctor present. Morgan Gower steps forward; as we are half-aware at the time, he is, of course, no doctor, but he does deliver the baby and with this deed his consuming passion for Emily begins.

For all its many felicities of observation and incident, *Morgan's Passing* does not come up to the high standard of Anne Tyler's other recent work. There is a self-indulgence in the portraiture of Morgan himself, whose numerous identity assumptions became for me merely tiresome.

At times, too, the whole world seems to be for the author a sort of immense fairground of idiosyncratic people all of whom can be viewed with delighted affection. This is fatal to a novel which demands to be taken on a serious level.

Nevertheless Anne Tyler's fidelity to her own vision means that she is never in danger of surrendering to the commonplace, the secondhand, and the failure of *Morgan's Passing* does not diminish my expectations of more novels of major quality from her.

Fiction — 2

Desmond Hogan

Sound & Fury

The Collected Stories of Sean O'Faolain: Volume I *Constable* £8.50

Reading these collected stories of Sean O'Faolain, one can only conclude that there has been something radically wrong with the world's perception of Irish literature in the Thirties and Forties. Recently it has become fashionable in Ireland to knock the reputations of Sean O'Faolain and Frank O'Connor. But whereas O'Connor's early stories have an unpretentious simplicity and often a gleeful Corkonian artfulness, what I dislike and resent about O'Faolain is that, rather than allowing us to hear a voice full of the mystery and complexity of Ireland after the War of Independence, he offers a superimposed slickness, an appeal to a sense of anecdote rather than any perception of great depth.

O'Faolain has frequently been compared or has compared himself with the Russians. His style lacks the necessary humility to allow this to be so; his world is a curious one of sound and fury. People march through Cork to protest against a Russian ballet company, young clerks temporarily flee Ireland for New York, commercial travellers are chased around Dublin with their trousers off. Of course there are stories that transcend this milieu, quiet stories, stories of priests racked by conscience, of lovers turning from patriotism, of rural Irish people hearing the music of the countryside despite poverty and emotional deprivation. But too often, especially in the first person narratives, the voice sounds unduly chauvinistic, claiming an authority no story writer could have, and thereby deflects itself from O'Faolain's chosen model, Daniel Corkery, the Corkman who wrote of the hidden Ireland of the 18th and 19th centuries, the Ireland of Eoghan Ruadh O Súilleabháin, of the bards, the hedge-school masters, those who kept the spirit of Ireland's literature alive under oppression.

Sometimes, as in *Teresa,* the sense of narrative is tremendous and unforgettable but I can't help feeling disappointed when I am finished. Disappointed because the real triumphs of Irish literature during this period are nearly forgotten — Francis Stuart's apocalyptic afterword to his experiences in Nazi Germany in *Redemption,* Kate O'Brien's English reverend mother in a Limerick convent in *The Land of Spices.* O'Faolain is a good writer, but I don't like the way he is laid upon every school course in Ireland as a touchstone; the real touchstones of depth lie elsewhere. In his autobiography *Vive Moi!* O'Faolain tells of his early exile and how he then returned to Ireland. This, one feels, was his greatest mistake.

He founded a magazine called *The Bell.* It was a very important magazine, publishing people like Kate O'Brien, Peader O'Donnell, Mary Lavin, names which will always be associated with integrity in a time when Ireland was dominated by barbaric farmers. O'Faolain was particularly trenchant in his criticisms of the Irish censorship laws. But perhaps, as giver of succour to other writers, he became a public man too quickly, relinquishing the world he was most at ease in, Harvard of the Twenties and the English academic world.

'Midsummer's Night Madness' and 'Teresa' stand head and shoulders over the other stories in this collection. The first is about an old Anglo-Irish man forced by IRA bigots into marrying a gipsy girl he has impregnated. It has a freshness which makes one understand Elizabeth Bowen's liking for O'Faolain's stories. The second is about a young novice who scampers from her convent after a gruelling, funny and piquant pilgrimage to the birthplace of Saint Thérèse with an old cantankerous nun. It has a compassion and understanding of human nature which reminds me of the best Irish stories, that singular mixture of traditional narrative and personal sympathy found oddly enough mainly among the women's short stories, Elizabeth Bowen's *Summer Night,* Mary Lavin's *The Little Prince, In a Café* and *Tom,* and more recently, almost at its height, in Edna O'Brien's *An Irish Revel* and *A Rose in the Heart.*

I am reminded of the moment I consider most precious in Irish literature, in Joyce's *The Dead,* when Gabriel Conroy looks West to where his wife's lover lies buried and shudders at the dark of the night and the mystery of love embodied in the dead boy. This moment strikes me as the one which defines Irish literature; the gap between the cynical Dubliner and the flamboyant, if doomed West-of-Irelander. O'Faolain seems to me one who intuited the ghost of Michael Furey once but who, rather than follow this intuition, decided like Gabriel Conroy to stay at home.

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John Arden

Death-Rider

Deep Song and Other Prose by FEDERICO GARCIÁ LORCA *Marion Boyars* £6.95
Lorca: The Theatre Beneath the Sand by GWYNNE EDWARDS *Marion Boyars* £12

To claim an enormous enthusiasm for Lorca combined with inability to speak Spanish carries about as much conviction as a quack-doctor on crutches. So one can respond to the over-all effect of Lorca's images, even though the words in which one receives them have to be taken on trust: and the structure of his plays should be accessible to anyone who has any sense of theatre at all. Yet there must inevitably be whole areas of the man's work that elude the perception. How much, for instance, of the story of *Blood Wedding* belongs to traditional Spanish dramatic/poetic obsessions with love, death and honour, and how much is new observation by an awakened modernist of 20th-century social realities? And how far does he see the latter (a) through 'marxist' realist spectacles, or, (b) through the freshly dissociated distorting mirrors of surrealism?

The answers to such questions can be found only if we are fully aware of the contrasts and similarities between what Lorca has to say and show, and what his audiences have already had built into them by national, regional and class environment. And this relation is an integral part of the *language*.

Dr Edwards, in his highly detailed and theatrically intuitive study of the plays, does his very expert best to solve the problem: but even so he only partially succeeds. He offers a clue about *Blood Wedding*'s documentary origins, quoting the poet's brother:

> Before *Blood Wedding* was a play, it was a short newspaper account . . . I remember Federico reading to me an account of a bride from Almeriá who, on her wedding day, ran off with her former lover. The bridegroom followed them and the two men killed each other . . .

But of course there is a great deal more: Lorca is not simply involved in 'social realism' and has already been toying elsewhere in his work with the principle theme.

> In his 'Poem of Deep Song' *(Poema del Canto Jondo)* . . . fate and death are already presented in a powerfully dramatic form, and two poems in particular anticipate scenes in [the play]. The first of these, 'Dialogue of the Bitter One' *(Diálogo del Amargo),* is . . . a play in miniature, in which Amargo . . . is met on the road by a mysterious rider . . . *She** invites him to ride with her . . . offers him a knife, and his death-cry chillingly ends the poem.

Just so: we are in some dimension of symbolism and Spanish iconography taking us back into the mediaeval world of skulls, succubi and open graves which is so strongly evident in the traditional Romances and can be traced through El Greco and Goya to Picasso and Dali. But surely an essential part of such iconography is its precision?

Gothic poetry always contrived to be both suggestive and specific at one and the same time. From the Romance *Death and the Lover* (trans. W. S. Merwin):

> I saw a white lady enter,
> White, whiter than the cold snow . . .
> 'I am not love, young lover,
> But Death, whom God has sent you . . .
> Let us depart, young lover,
> For the hour is over'.

Yet, in Christopher Maurer's edition of Lorca's essays and lectures, the *Diálogo del Amargo* is reprinted, and I read the Maurer version before getting on to Dr Edwards's commentary. This is puzzling. First, the mysterious rider, whom Dr Edwards identifies with Death, is presented as a *man* ('stopping *his** horse': stage direction). Second: there is no exact indication that Amargo's last cry — 'Ay yayayay' — is in fact a death-cry: he has already uttered it at the beginning of the dialogue, where it is described as a 'song'. The stage direction at the end says simply:

> The Rider helps Amargo. The two of them take the road into Granada. In the background the mountains bristle with hemlocks and nettles.

Obviously Amargo does die. The 'exeunt' direction is followed by his mother's lament: but does he die there and then? This is not a trivial point. The variant interpretations of Dr Edwards and Mr Maurer imply two quite different poetic experiences — either a horse going to Granada with one living person and one dead one on it, or with one living person and one who is doomed.

And the sex of the death-rider? I don't think our current preoccupations with non-sexist expression can force us to deny that a man or a woman here would alter crucially our understanding of the poem. So which is right? Between two obviously well-informed authors we are left baffled.

No doubt, if one knew Spanish, the 'he or she' problem would swiftly be solved. But would such a knowledge help us all that much to interpet 'Ay yayayay'? Awareness of death: or the shock of death itself? Or is Lorca being deliberately ambiguous? If he is, we ought to know, to make a proper judgment of the poem, whether the ambiguity, in Spanish, shades emotionally towards one or other possibility. But we can't: and we have nothing but an imprecise but nonetheless exceedingly powerful impression of knives, horsehoofs, thick night, nettles and hemlock.

There can be no doubt that Lorca, with his combination of local newspaper actuality, traditional poetic theme, and rural folk-memories, did re-shape much modern theatre into a thoroughly new pattern both outside Spain as well as in. But, because of this translation problem, his work, and the commentaries on it, must be more valuable by analogy rather than direct presentation. Two lines from 'Yerma', to show what I mean:

> Oh, what pain of imprisoned blood
> Is nailing wasps at my brain's base!

Dr Edwards speaks of the 'evocative images and strong rhythms' of the speech. Images, yes: but the rhythms, whatever they once were, have become a series of hisses that would positively pervert any actress's attempt to realise the heroine's character. Poetic drama of such intensity depends primarily on rhythm to establish character and mood — the plot, images and stage-pictures are inevitably subordinate: and yet if we want to present Lorca in English they are all we have to go by.

He remains a dramatic poet of the first rank who only can exist in English in the mind's eye and the mind's ear. Both of these books will be found excellent stimulants within that limita-

*my italics; J. A.

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tion. I don't think that we can expect any production of Lorca to go beyond a comprehensive-school version of *Blood Wedding* I saw last year in Muswell Hill: the young actors spoke and moved rather like Daleks: and the effect was terrific — so long as one listened hard and responded to what was not in fact really there . . .

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Race, sex & class in children's books: 4

What were we arguing about?

ROBERT LEESON describes what his chief ambition has been since he began to write children's books.

FOR SEVERAL YEARS now the traditionally peaceful world of children's literature has been disturbed by an often acrimonious debate about sex, class and race bias in reading for the young. Veterans of earlier literary battles will recognise the argument over form and content which has gone on since Aristotle was a lad. Writers themselves will see the familiar lines of the old 'commitment versus creativity' struggle.

When people counterpose commitment and creativity, often enough they are thinking of a commitment to social change, in this case to further the rights of working-class, black or female children. The new, even when about to be justified, excites hostility, while the old, even when about to be discarded, is tolerated on the inertia principle. The rule may rule even though, as Brecht shrewdly noted, it ought to be thought exceptional.

The status quo has its magic, appearing to be 'life' when it is clinging on for dear life. And many writers have a deep attachment to the status quo. Fear of change is a powerful stimulus to creative escapism, back into the past, back into childhood, away into never-never land. Who wants to grow up/older? Who says the future will be better than the past? And when to natural fears are added less agreeable fears of loss of privilege, impressive forces are at work.

You are attached to the status quo, you commit yourself to change. Attachment to the past, the present even, calls up the deepest instincts, commitment to the future calls for an act of thought, an act of faith in one's thought. Deeply rooted conventional attitudes, traditionally accepted outlooks, speak to us with an unconscious air of authority. The Christian writers of children's stories can speak of the 'triumph of the light over the dark', quite unaware of the how controversial a statement that is; the author of books reflecting a very limited middle-class background and experience can tell you with utter honesty: 'I am not concerned with class, only with people.'

So with other things: the Englishman, safe behind frontiers almost inviolate for a millennium, marvels at the lack of sense of humour in foreigners, the decent white is entirely bewildered by the touchiness of the black, and the male comedian stares blankly when asked, 'Why no jokes about fathers-in-law?'

These attitudes lie deep down in that well of the mind below the conscious activity of the everyday. The water lies so low we have forgotten when and where the rain fell that fed it, do not know through how many strata it has seeped and what it has absorbed on its way down. This is the level to which we all go when we dream, from which writers draw their most spontaneous work, so surprising even themselves at times that they are persuaded their inspiration has no earthly, material source.

Certainly they think it is not to be calculated or quantified, to be analysed only with difficulty, not to be disputed, and not — perish the thought — guided or organised.

Yet here, say writers, are people, non-writers at that, who reckon they can change by an act of will relations of human beings across the divides of society, colour or sex, as writers see them. They think they can replace the rainfall in the well by bucketsful from the tap, meticulously cleansed of social contamination.

Well, there's a clear antagonism between reformers and writers, many writers at least. But what of the 'committed' writers? Where do they stand? Do they — from the conviction that people, deprived, dominated, oppressed, neglected, scorned, condescended to, should have justice — imagine it can be done between the covers of a book, by deliberate decision, here and now? And if they do, and act on the conviction, will what they write be literature, will it be *the story*? Will it draw the kids from play and the old folk from the chimney corner? Will it cause pleasure or will it only command respect?

I MUST REFER here to my own writing, for it represents to me an experience others may recognise, that of the problem which is its own solution. My chief ambition since I began to write children's books, and many years before that, was to write books in which ordinary children — children from working-class homes, from the estates, from a background like my own — might recognise themselves, yet feel the vicarious excitement for which convention deems characters from a class apart to be necessary. For I believe that only when we have a body of literature which truly reflects its whole readership, in realist and escapist terms, can we say we are not concerned with class any more, but only with people.

Well, as it has turned out, my stories have expanded their range, aiming at the free girl character, the black, too. It sounds like your ready-made formula writing. But here's roughly what happened, or part of it.

I wanted to write an Elizabethan story of an apprentice who discovers that his fortune depends on sailing on a slave ship, who sets the slaves free and at last sails home a grown man in the company of Drake. It was a worthy notion and I sweated over it. But at first it would not budge. Then I read a memoir by Drake's nephew about his uncle's raid on the treasure trains in the Caribbean. Drake's allies were the Cimaroons, he said, escaped slaves who lived as guerrillas in the rain forest. Then I realised that was the intractable element in my story. It was the slaves or rather my own prejudiced view of them as people to be pitied and set free. As people who claimed their own freedom, they stood out suddenly in my mind as real characters. Instead of their being simply factors in the story of my hero, he became a factor in their story. The tensions thus created, the energy released, made the story begin to move. But the new element was not invented, it was no abstraction. It was simply a part of reality, of history, that I had hitherto ignored and might have gone on doing so but for the imperative to look again at what I had previously accepted.

A little later I tried, for the third or fourth time, to write a school story. It had to be a comprehensive school of course. The dominance of the private school story is more or less

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gone, thank goodness. But with it has gone the conveniently enclosed scene which gives the school community a life of its own. A state school story has really to be a community story, as parents, police, others intrude on the daily life of the pupils. Comprehensive school stories (some critics' illusions to the contrary) are thus less likely material for formula stories than the old boarding-school set-up.

I had in mind a boy who has problems which arise from his background, housing, and so on, as well as problems from his personal relations at school. He enlists the aid of fantasy to solve them. Fantasy is highly appropriate to the working-class story, for indeed many of the problems suffered by the poorer families seem at first sight to be susceptible only of fantasy solutions. Anyway, I had my hero. I had his problems. I had a bully waiting for him at school. I had a genie waiting to help him out (perhaps).

BUT THE STORY stayed stuck. Then I heard my own children discussing the way some of the West Indian pupils threw their weight about at school and why. Another character leapt uninvited into my story, a West Indian and a bully. It hardly seemed Race Relations orientated, but that was exactly how it proved to be, for now the hero had a choice of bullies, a black one he feared and the white one he detested but who cynically offered to protect him from the first. I felt the boat moving.

It was only half way through my story that something hit me which I had been quite blind to. The genie, too, was black. Not because I made him black, but because genies are black.

A good deal of the magic of European and Arab civilisation has been made by the labour of black genies. It wasn't insight on my part, simply hindsight. Once the genie materialised, he did so into the tensions already existing not only in my story but in every real school and community in the country.

Into the story, also uninvited, came a strong girl character, not by intention but by observation, for as every city teacher knows, girls from West Indian families are just not to be pushed around.

There's a good deal more to tell (who can stop a writer talking?) but to sum up, my experience has been that seen as an abstraction the question of removing bias from children's books can be a burden to writers. Seen as an index of the enormous changes which have taken place and continue to take place in the world around us, it marks an opportunity. There has never been such a wealth of characters, such diverse motivation, such complexity of personal problems calling for reflection in our stories. These are not the conditions which will impel writers to stereotyped or formula writing. On the other hand, these diverse elements in themselves do not lead to creative complexity in the work of any writer, even the writers most willing to draw on them, the ones called 'committed'!

What is most important about the debate however, is that everyone has been set to brooding about their own writing. The grit has been at work in the oyster and while so far we have had mostly expressions of discomfort, there are pearls in the making.

An expanded version of this article was first published in *Signal* magazine, May 1976, No 20 (The Thimble Press, Lockwood, Station Road, South Woodchester, Stroud, Glos. GL5 5EQ), and in *Children's Books and Class Society* (Writers & Readers, 65p).

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Fiction—3

John Lucas

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Among the stories brought together in this volume is one called 'The Darkwater Hall Mystery'. It's a pastiche of the Sherlock Holmes stories, is therefore narrated by Dr Watson, and contains the following moment, in which Watson is almost spilled from the coach in which he's travelling towards the Hall itself.

> The cause was not far to seek — a human figure of indescribable menace lurking in the hedgerow. I caught a glimpse of a hairy fist shaken, of rotten teeth bared in a snarl, no more . . .

The figure is Black Ralph, would-be murderer of Sir Harry Fairfax, identified by Watson as 'one of the finest types of English country gentlemen'. Amis does a pretty good imitation of Conan Doyle's style, and of Watson's prejudices, which isn't surprising since he's a first-rate mimic. Proof of that is contained in the story 'Hemingway in Space', which exactly echoes the tight-lipped fake-stoical manner of *The Old Man and the Sea*. But that isn't to say very much, especially since Hemingway has often enough been parodied, not least by himself. On the other hand, 'Hemingway in Space' nails some of Papa's most tiresome clichés, whereas 'The Darkwater Hall Mystery' supplies its own, and ones for which Amis, rather than Watson, is responsible.

It may be Watson who remarks that Black Ralph is a figure of 'indescribable menace' but it's Amis who has the plot reveal that he's obviously a villain because he's obviously a villain. (Amis made the same point, I seem to remember, in a poor TV detective play.) The objection to this has to be that it cuts out any interest in the character himself, so that all we have is a tale of indulged prejudices, in which we know how matters are going to turn out: the surprise of there being no surprise simply doesn't work. And this is only partly due to the fact that Amis is short on skill when it comes to handling the detective story, a criticism which extends not only to the clumsy *Riverside Villas Murder*, but also to the one story in this collection which hasn't previously seen the light of day. 'To See the Sun' is a very awkwardly told story of vampirism. In fact, all the later stories seem awkward, badly told and for the most part badly written. The one exception is 'Who or What Was It', and although this brilliant fancy about Amis finding himself in a 'real-life situation' which repeats much of *The Green Man* has its rough moments that's probably because it was written to be heard rather than read.

'This collection is really one of chips from a novelist's bench', Amis says in his introduction. No doubt, but the wood from which the more recent stories come is inferior stuff. In Amis's case, later means worse. Earlier is a different matter, and that's particularly true of the clutch of stories dealing with army life at the end of the second world war. These allow for the springing of reversal and surprise which by the time of 'Dear Illusion' — about a non-poet's recognition of his utter absence of talent — has hardened into a gimmick ('All the Blood Within Me' also suffers from this, although I can see that Amis wants to persuade us of the variousness of people).

But in the early stories the surprise works. It's pretty good in 'My Enemy's Enemy', where the unregarded 'regular' officer is given a speech that stingingly rebukes the liberal conscience of the central character, Thurston, who hasn't done all that he might have done to help another officer he knows is the object of the Adjutant's dislike.

> You know what I think? I don't think you care tuppence. You don't care beyond talking, any road. I think you're really quite sold on the Adj.'s crowd, never mind what you say about them.

The rebuke may feel unfair, since Thurston *doesn't* like the Adjutant's crowd, and he *has* meant to help the other officer. But Amis effectively makes the point that from where others stand we are not what we are but what we do — and that those others can surprise us by their capacity for acting in ways that we hadn't expected but which make sense.

Amis's ability to spring surprises about his characters, which upset the complacent certainties that he adopts in 'The Darkwater Hall Mystery', is at its best in 'I Spy Strangers'. This story is surely a masterpiece? It brilliantly catches the feel of those days in 1945 leading up to the overwhelming victory of the Attlee government, and the puzzled inability of conservative-minded people to understand what was happening. It also manages to be just to and interesting about all the characters, from the right-wing Major Raleigh, through the trim fascist, Sergeant Doll, the quintessential liberal Archer, to Hargreaves, the socialist intellectual whom Doll hates almost as much as he hates the Major. Doll seems to be a parody. In fact, however, we are made to take him seriously. He may be unlovely, but he's understandable; and he's no fool. The writer who imagined Doll had a wit and intelligence that aren't much in evidence in the latter part of *Collected Short Stories*.

Michael Hofmann

Love on the Rocks

The young man climbed out of the sea, dripping. He had a beautiful body. The king's daughter did not resist him. The love stirred inside her. Then he returned to the sea, and she to her maidens and to the housework . . . Later she founded a city.

The song was so ancient that even the French girls could not understand it. (But they were landlocked, from Strasbourg.) They hummed the nasal tune, and declared that you lost all the romanticism anyway in translation, and kept only the pornographic aspect.

There was onion soup with bread and cheese in it, *flambée* with rum. When everyone had gone, we decided to clear up. The girl put on her dancing-shoes, rested one foot on top of the other, and started washing the plates. — I was given a dishcloth.

That Despicable Race

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

John Spurling

Right Angle to the Universe

Max Beckmann: The Triptychs *Whitechapel*
José Clemente Orozco *Museum of Modern Art, Oxford*
Edvard Munch *Riverside, Hammersmith*

Expressionism is a melodramatic style, dependent for its force on a sense of social or personal upheaval, recklessness, disjunction, imminent chaos, narrowly held in check by the rigorous concentration of the artist. To examine the photographs of Beckmann, Orozco and Munch is to notice behind the superficial differences — Beckman suggests a captain of industry, Orozco an intellectual mechanic, Munch a dandyish country gentleman — a certain physical similarity, as of men standing at a right angle to the universe, self-sufficient, shock-proof. Of course they were not so, or not originally. Munch's appalling family history — his mother and sister dead of tuberculosis and his father given up to religious melancholia while Munch was still a child — culminated in his own nervous collapse during his forties; Bechmann broke down after a year as a hospital orderly in the first world war; Orozco lost his left hand in a childhood accident and lived through the 10 years' carnage of the Mexican Revolution. All three were survivors.

But whereas Munch and Orozco, once their ordeals were over, could settle more or less without distraction to the business of painting, Beckmann still had troubles in store. Dismissed from his teaching post in Frankfurt when the Nazis came to power, pilloried in the Degenerate Art Show of 1937, he left Germany never to return, spent the war in Amsterdam and died in America in 1950. Yet, astonishingly, it was during this last 17-year period of insecurity and exile that he painted his monumental series of triptychs, the ninth (the only one missing from this exhibition) being completed the day before his death, the tenth (still in its under-state of charcoal, ink and coloured chalk) left unfinished.

Beckmann was never, like Grosz or Dix, a directly political or satirical artist. In a lecture delivered in London in 1938 he said:

> I take it for granted that there are two separate worlds — that of the spirit and that of political reality; they may impinge on each other from time to time, but they are essentially different.

These crowded and enigmatic scenes, which, as an essay in the catalogue cogently argues, are partly indebted to Piscatorian theatre, are no more specific to Hitler's tyranny than *Fidelio* to Napoleon's. The central panel usually presents an archetypal episode (Perseus saving Andromeda, the classical gods making merry on Olympus, a king going into exile, a stage king committing suicide) to which the side panels act as glosses or sub-plots with a more contemporary flavour. But periods, costumes and references are jumbled together. In one of the side-panels to *Acrobats* (1939) a golden-haired girl in page-boy's uniform is being chatted up by a bearded barbarian with a vicious grin. The barbarian wears the costume of an ancient Greek soldier and one reads him at first as a disguised stormtrooper, symbolising — like the sadistic-looking schoolmaster in the right-hand side-panel to *The Beginning*, who is posed in front of a Greek bust with Aryan overtones — the Nazi usurpation and distortion of European culture.

But didn't the Greeks foul their own culture? Don't we have our contemporary barbarians dressed Greeks? Beckmann's painted theatre is full of such to-and-fro reversals.

Presumably it was his political independence and the opaque complexity of his work which saved him from the attention of the authorities in occupied Amsterdam; and presumably it was his own painfully acquired confidence in 'the essential realities' concealed beyond 'the illusions of life' which kept him painting masterpieces in spite of what was happening around him. In 1940 he wrote in his diary: 'If one conceives of this whole thing — the entire war, or also the entire life as only a scene from the Theatre of Infinity, it is much lighter to bear.' Seeing the triptychs now, glowing like stained-glass windows round the huge white space of the Whitechapel, it seems incredible that this many-layered drama of the fears and miseries not just of the Third Reich but of Western European history has never been staged before.

Orozco's view of humanity and its history was in some ways similar to Beckmann's. He took a dim view of it, though he found no refuge, as Beckmann did, in esoteric philosophy. Orozco, too, held aloof from specific political allegiances and (unlike his compatriot muralists, Rivera and Siqueiros, who were both Marxists) looked upon demagogues with the same disfavour as tyrants. Beginning with political caricature and a series of melancholy watercolour brothel scenes he reverted in the Twenties to his memories of the Civil War in many small paintings and drawings of soldiers and their victims. The soldiers, seen from behind or in profile, are hardly more than close-knit phalanxes of clothes and accoutrements, brutal plagues of bandoleroed, sombreroed destruction rushing past or away. Although he later made frequent use of myth (American Indian and European) for his murals he always remained, unlike Beckmann, essentially a straight history painter with a strong element of caricature.

A travelling show such as this, relying inevitably on chips from the bench — studies, fragments, side-issues — cannot unfortunately give much idea of the enormous, Michelangelesque indictments which he painted directly on to the walls in fresco. Expressionism is nothing without the heat turned on. But there are one or two small paintings on canvas — *The Demagogue* rattling a skeleton and *The Tyrant* rattling chains, for example — as well as a good selection of prints which suggest that Orozco's strength lies in his immediacy, in the withering impact of his unambiguous images of fanaticism, violence and domination.

Whoever associates Munch exclusively with mental torment will be unprepared for most of the paintings lent by the Munch Museum to Riverside's brand-new gallery. They were done in the second half of his life, after he had left the clinic in Copenhagen and returned to Norway. There is, it's true, one anxious, pale-blue lady on a veranda, with a red house and green sky in the background to suggest the real colour of her bottled-up emotions; and there are two bridges with stretched-out railings, as in *The Scream*, but instead of a black, skeletal figure with its hands to its ears they frame only calm, bright groups of girls in their Sunday best. Most of these richly coloured landscapes are celebratory — they surge with emotion for what has been recovered and patched up — and even *Starry Night*, with its ominous echo of Van Gogh and its ghostly shadow in the foreground, is an expression of comfortable awe rather than turmoil and terror. Humanity and its troubles have receded into a distant line of warm yellow lights under the hill. One feels that it is almost as a joke on his former self that Munch puts a sketchy head and shoulders in front of a spacious perspective of trees, wrinkles the shadow of one of them into a prostrate figure and entitles the whole *The Murderer in the Avenue*.

Max Beckmann: Triptych

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Magnificent Obsession

JOHN COLEMAN concludes his two-part review of the London Film Festival.

For a gratified host of us the 24th London Film Festival went out with a bang last Sunday, when Abel Gance's silent epic *Napoleon* was shown at the Empire — with the benefit of a new score arranged by Carl Davis and played under his baton by the 43-piece Wren Orchestra — in its fullest reconstruction since the premier at the Paris Opera back on 7 April 1927. The prime mover in this 5-hour labour of loving craft must be allowed to be Kevin Brownlow, film enthusiast extraordinary, whose book, *The Parade's Gone By* (1968), itself a milestone in the history of cinema, was dedicated — it may be remembered — to Abel Gance and who 'stumbled upon two reels by chance' while an avid schoolboy collector. (The complete story of where Brownlow went from there, and he did not go it alone, is too long to relate; but it is a model of its recuperative kind.)

But, as we settled in our seats promptly at 10.30 a.m., flicking Saturday night sleep from our eyes, it was impossible to still a pang of disquiet. After all, the £7 tickets had been fetching as much as £100 and there was the danger implicit in all gala occasions: rapturous self-applause for just being there. A little of that there may well have been, but it is my pleasure to report that I came out into the evening streets delighted, admiring and incredulous.

One had seen botched versions and fragments before, but nothing had suggested the sustained, bravura scale and invention of the enterprise. Gance, himself a silky, imperious Saint-Just, proved a superb inspirer of crowds, somehow individualising his mobs of extras at the Convention, the magnificent reanimated armies sweeping across the screen, into Italy, in the triptych close. Inevitably, adjustments of an uncondescending order have sometimes to be made to one's contemporary expectations; the Josephine of Gina Manès needs to be taken with a pinch of Attic salt, yet the unmartial gaucherie with which Albert Dieudonné's possessed Napoleon greets her and grinning small son on their social call at his headquarters is quite beautifully played for high comedy.

Amid a wealth of startling sequences and images — and Gance was never afraid to strap a camera to a galloping horse or send it swinging up high like a pendulum or encage it at wave level — the opening snowfight, with the young Bonaparte undaunted by sneering schoolboy enemies, is fiercely exhilarating to this day, as is the wild dormitory battle with bursting pillows, a fandango of feathers. Sometimes the screen splits into a honeycomb of busy images, at others ghostly superimpositions dictate quieter, more inner emotions. In a drenching warscape, arms claw despairingly up through the grey mud. Beaten at Brienne, Admiral Hood with disdainful British phlegm pours himself an elegant cup of tea and, sipping, orders the destruction of the French fleet.

Other high points would be as various as the decadently erotic Bal des Victimes, marking the end of the Terror, where Napoleon singles out his Josephine for attention and sits down to play chess with her strikingly handsome lover, General Hoche. 'Be careful,' he warns, 'or I shall take your Queen.' Or the excellent improvisation of a soldier, with drummers in short supply, lining up a row of tambours to receive the rat-a-tat-tat of a hailstorm. Or the sheer outrageous panache of the *tricolore* triptych that brings the breathtaking overall vision to a close. At 91, Abel Gance was sadly not fit enough to travel to London. But, *ma parole,* his 53-year-old film was.

One of the blessings of last year's festival was a blissfully comical feature debut by the Glaswegian Bill Forsyth, *That Sinking Feeling,* which followed the half-baked delinquency of a handful of rootless kids in the ruined heart of Glasgow, received some ecstatic notices and has just, at last, opened on home ground. Forsyth's new film, *Gregory's Girl,* moves up a social rung or two, into the sprucer world of New Town, where an amiable beanpole called Gordon John Sinclair impersonates gawky young teenager Gregory, living at home but barely known to his parents, suddenly in love with pretty, dominant Dorothy (Dee Hepburn), the star of his school's soccer team. How he is ferried by one lass after another to the girl who *really* fancies him does largely for plot. The omnipresent pawky humour, of situation, dialogue, fleeting expressions, is the true cement.

Forsyth has a hawk's eye for the everyday incongruous, and an ear to match. A totty dressed as a penguin wanders bemusedly down school corridors. A short pal (one of the stars of *That Sinking Feeling*) stares over a bridge, primed with useful facts: 'Do you know that at least 12 tons of cornflakes passes under here every day?' As Gregory and his new girl lie side by side in the park, careful not to slip off the world, the camera tilts the earth in a stunning little conceit. Bill Forsyth is an original, ours, and will someone please buy this super indigenous movie for cinema showing *right away*? Mike Leigh's equally original and therefore quite different pained comedy, *Grown-Ups,* another beauty, has already been and gone on TV since the festival; and a single telly airing for John MacKenzie's professional gangster job, *The Long Good Friday* (reviewed briefly a fortnight ago), now seems its likely fate. It is to choke with despair.

Of three other new British entries caught during the festival, Karl Francis's *The Mouse and the Woman* was surely the most intriguing, based on a Dylan Thomas story, eight years in the setting up and making, and illuminated by flashes of raw visual poetry. As uncompromisingly Welsh as its director (whose 1977 documentary about a colliery closing, *Above Us the Earth*, was produced by the BFI), it staunchly resorts to subtitles in one or two domestic passages while following the tormented fortunes of Morgan, a mystical young worker-writer half-goaded into enlisting in the first world war during which he is stigmatised as a coward. Home again, he is drawn into an affair with the loopy, elusive lady of the manor, whose colliery-owning husband is itchily confined to a wheelchair; there are harsh scenes of scabs against miners; moments in a madhouse supervene; the seashore close is tragic, a strangling, policemen in the distance, the tide coming in on a glittering beach. Of that old War, Wilfred Owen wrote, 'The poetry is in the pity,' and some such feeling clearly lies behind this enigmatic, sometimes over-rhetorical first feature. I found Morgan's women — mistress and sister — magnificent.

To last week's comments on Peter Greenaway's *The Falls,* one might add it would be larky at one-sixth its length and has just shared the 1980 BFI Film Award, being cited as 'the most colourful and imaginative British film of the year'. Hohum. As for Bill Foulk's *Beastly Treatment,* even Ronald Lacey — slouching absurdly through as a rum, mock-cowboy antique dealer — acts abominably in this amateur-night nasty.

Jottings: Joel DeMott's *Demon Lover Diary* is an utterly zany and arresting document, shot in 16mm and colour, of what she witnessed and went through while her lover Jeff tried to help out in the making of a low-budget horror movie with two *very* strange fellows: a must. Jamil Dehlavi's *The Blood of Hussain,* an uneasy mixture of documentary, fiction narrative, and vivid surrealism, foresaw the military coup in Pakistan by a month. The acclaimed Sohrab Shahid Saless, working in West Germany, offered the minatory *All in Order,* a hypnotic account of a mind at the end of its tether, hauled back to a kind of normality. Fred Wiseman's *Model,* about models, is a joy. This and Zanussi's very fine *The Constant Factor,* Harold Becker's *The Black Marble* (Paula Prentiss once more in her element) and Joan Miklin Silver's *Head Over Heels* will be commercially shown in due course. Meanwhile, Bertrand Blier's *Buffet Froid* (Classic, Chelsea — AA) wastes his marvellous father, Gerard Depardieu and others in a calculatedly numb nonsense about gratuitous murders.

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

High Fever

The People Show *Hampstead*
Please Shine Down on Me by OLWEN WYMARK *Theatre Upstairs*
The Middleman by HENRY ARTHUR JONES *Orange Tree, Richmond*
After Mercer *Cottesloe*

The People Show is clearly an acquired taste, rather like the fermented mares' milk I tried so hard to enjoy on a recent visit to Outer Mongolia; and I think that at last I am learning how to swallow it without embarrassing its many admirers with unseemly grimaces. The trick is to abandon all expectations of plot, as well as that moralising, categorising habit which contemporary critics, not least myself, bring with their flashlight ballpoints into the theatre. Its products are no more specifically and concretely 'about' anything than is the kind of dream you're likely to have if you're developing a high fever or have crammed too much curry into your stomach at too late an hour. They aim to surprise, disorient, disturb; to jam thumbs into the subterranean mind and pull out imaginative plums. Think of the *Goon Show* as it might have been written by a team that included Artaud, Salvador Dali, M.R. James and Joe Orton, and — no, you still haven't quite got its blend of the quaint and the sinister, the droll and the frankly silly.

Show 86, as the offering at Hampstead claims to be, is set in a fleapit cinema that becomes a hotel that becomes a rather racy

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sauna; and it boasts one recurring theme or motif, that of a Japanese movie about a macho warrior who slices off his own arm after being bested by a 'black knight'. At one averagely extravagant juncture, an eager young blade sits at a table with this bamboo-encrusted hero, a transvestite, sax-playing sheikh, and a girl wearing nothing but a tee-shirt plastered with rough sexual invitations. They drink tea that pours from the steaming gadgetry at the rear-end of a hospital trolley, from which a prone body has just been removed. The milk has been nervously fetched from outside the back door, which has opened to reveal glaring white light and a noise from the *Book of Revelations*. The sugar has been added in scrupulous response to the guest's requests for one lump or two; but all in the same cup.

As this last touch suggests, the People people can become facetious, their invention arbitrary and frivolous. They also succeed in creating sequences replete with unease, as when a girl swaggers into the cinema, buys herself a ticket but finds that all the candy-boxes are empty and the popcorn made of polystyrene, then is led through dark corridors, up stairs and past hectically snogging couples by a seedy, leering, limping commissionaire with a torch, a Hammer-film groper if ever there was one. Better add Kafka, Pinter and Poe to our speculative team of writers or, better still, admit that the People Show, for all its longueurs and fatuities, is a thoroughly original enterprise that deserves to be the cult it has indisputably become. My internal Ronay guide can't quite give it star-rating; but it prefers it to lactating Mongolian horse any day.

Olwen Wymark's latest is also a somewhat disorienting experience, though probably less deliberately so. It begins with a husband bringing his doxy home, only to discover that his wife is skulking beneath the stairs: she says nothing then or later, but amiably excludes him from the master-bedroom while importing a senile crone from the local old folks' home. The plot then fragments somewhat, introducing tales and characters whose prime connection is fringe religion. A tape-recorded Peruvian hermit, enjoining spiritual self-discovery on her listeners, turns out to be a hoaxing Irishman, imitating his obnoxious dead wife. The writing is often excellent, but the evidence too scattered and disorganised for it to be easy to say if the overall intention is more than to peddle marital and metaphysical disillusion: nostra exposed, a glum humour everywhere, and the moon persistently refusing to 'shine down on me'. Roland Rees directs, perhaps a bit too soberly.

Assessing the return of *Nicholas Nickleby* to the Aldwych in a balanced, on-the-one-hand-on-the-other kind of style is coming to seem as presumptuous as critically dissecting the Second Coming itself, thanks to orgasmic columns from Bernard Levin, clamorous queues at the box-office and the collective frenzy of my fellow-reviewers. See it, I suppose, if you can. Personally, I spent an obscurer but still engaging evening on the upper floor of a suburban pub, watching a late-Victorian melodrama that might, I suppose, be summed up as Dickens and Jones. The villain is a master-potter who becomes rich on the fruits of an employee's invention, only to see that employee turn against him in a massive paternal huff ('melt there like wax in the fire of my revenge!') when the potter's son seduces his favourite daughter. It is, to be sure, greater nonsense than *Nickleby*, and thinner nonsense as well; but it's marked by a comparable sympathy for the weak, good-natured and gullible, and a somewhat similar contempt for those whose power and status comes from exploiting others. The two main combatants are played without undue self-parody by Barrie Cookson, shifty and cadging, and Patrick O'Connell, stumbling but not sinking under the burden of transforming himself from the dotty boffin to obsessed Jacobean revenger.

After Mercer is Christopher Hampton's compilation of exemplary snippets from the late David's work, and must sometimes have confused those unfamiliar with *After Haggerty, Flint* et al. But no one could have missed that idiosyncratic blend of humour and pain, detachment and obsession, as the evening turned to Mercer's relationship with his father, Mercer's troubled marxism, his unceasing efforts to discover and be himself. This was a platform production, played by a classy cast that included Jack Shepherd, Mark Dignam and, as the most aggressive of the dads, a bald, trumpeting Brian Glover; and no repeat performances are presently scheduled. They should be.

Among this week's contributors:

ROBERT LEESON is children's editor of the *Morning Star* and author of 14 novels and non-fiction books for young children.

DES HOGAN'S play *The Ikon Maker* opens at the Gate Theatre, Notting Hill, at the end of December.

TED HONDERICH teaches philosophy at University College, London.

TROY KENNEDY MARTIN'S most recent plays for television include *The Sweeney* and *The Last Z Cars*.

Television – 1

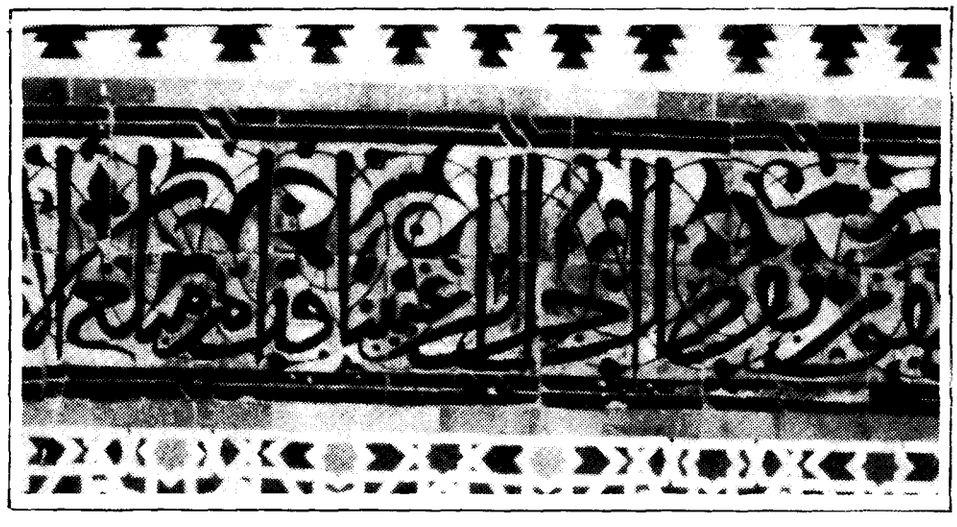
Julian Barnes

Top Shelf

One particularly nasty method of maiming, popular among Bantu criminal elements, is effected by the insertion of a sharpened bicycle spoke into the spinal cord: the victim is paralysed to a greater or lesser degree according to the exact demand of his assailant, or the assailant's hirer. Our European equivalent of such a fate is finding oneself part of an Andrea Newman serial. Not for nothing did poor old (or rather, nasty middle-aged) *Mackenzie* (BBC-1) wind up in the chrome-wheeled chair.

I've noticed a certain shame among those who confess an addiction to Ms Newman's work; people much more willingly admit a weakness for *Dallas*. Perhaps this is because the Hagman vehicle is so openly bad, with its wooden acting, cornball plotline and stagey camerawork. Such badness leaves the *Dallas* addict a get-out: no-one will ever believe he *really* likes it — they'll assume that his pleasure in the thing is basically camp. Whereas with Ms Newman's work, superior as it is in every respect, there's a much greater risk the addict is going to be held seriously accountable for his actions.

The shame, I guess, comes from a fear that Ms Newman's work is a sort of emotional pornography: that being caught watching it is rather like being caught reaching for the top



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shelf in a newsagent's. But there's no need for it. Ms Newman, one should assert unequivocally, is a very good writer of TV drama serials. We accept without query or embarrassment the daisychains of passion in Racine, the coincidences of Anthony Powell, and I don't see why we shouldn't equally accept the heightened, incestuously-plotted world of *Bouquet* or *Mackenzie*. It's not a pleasant world, or a comforting one (Ms Newman is a chilly moralist), but it seems to me not an unrealistic one.

The brutal side of loving is her speciality: the meanness, the possessiveness, the envy and the spite. She's also very good on family emotions. 'They fuck you up, your mum and dad': Ms Newman takes Larkin's starting-point, hurdles his envoi ('Get out as early as you can,/And don't have any kids yourself') and brings us Part Two: they fuck you up, your son and daughter. The inevitability with which Mackenzie's son Jamie returned in the final episode to fuck up his dad as much as he possibly could came across with a horribly plausible authority. And all other beckoning sentimentalities were similarly spurned: not even the winning Mrs Mackenzie was to be allowed her bowl of warm soup at the finish. The best life can find to offer the incurably virtuous (at least in Andrea Newman serials) is to be allowed to become the matron of a rebarbative Scottish-baronial old-folks' home.

Whatever you thought of *Mackenzie,* you couldn't deny that throughout it there was a firm mind in charge. Mike Leigh, on the other hand, creates his plays in company with his actors, who are allowed to develop their own characters under his supervision. *Grown-Ups* (BBC-2) illustrated the main problem of the play without an author: it doesn't have an author. The actor-director technique, when it doesn't come off properly, produces rather what you would expect: some well-observed mannerisms, some shiveringly authentic scraps of dialogue, and some vivid characterisation — notably from Philip Davis as Dick, a prognathous, dole-queue version of Max von Sydow — but not too much else. *Grown-Ups* offered us scenes from the life of a high-tea-and-plastic-sofa culture on a Canterbury housing estate; but the scenes lacked development or controlled elaboration.

Moreover, as the play unfolded, and the irritating egotism or blank-eyed passivity of the characters merely repeated itself, one felt assailed by broader worries. No doubt the lemming lives of the characters on display are indeed as vacuous and cliché-riddled as Leigh's actors made out; but wasn't there something about the endeavour — assisted, no doubt, by its going out to a late-night BBC-2 audience — which was more than a touch patronising? The laughter it provoked felt, after a while, the sort of laughter one ought to treat with suspicion.

Queasiest viewing of the week came on *Newsnight* (BBC-2), where a bouncily scoop-happy Martin Young introduced a series of statements from parents and relatives of victims of the Yorkshire Ripper. In a sequence of melodramatically posed clips the bereaved were shown first in silent, brooding profile, and then, turned through 90 degrees, in vengeful and naked full-face, addressing the Ripper direct. Hatred, rage, contempt and fear dressed themselves in a few inadequate scraps of language. 'You're not a man, you're a beast.' 'Let's talk about real criminals — bank robberies — you're a non-runner.' 'You should be classed as the biggest coward the world has ever known — put that in the *Guinness Book of Records.*' 'Every living person curses you.' 'You're not significant at all.' 'I think you are the devil itself.' 'You are probably a very insignificant little man.'

It was heart-rending to watch and, one trusts, purgative for the bereaved; though quite what effect it might have on the search for the Ripper, or on the Ripper itself, is anybody's guess (how many guesses did the BBC have before showing it?). The taunts of insignificance seemed unhappily misplaced, especially as significance in our society is normally measured in column inches and tube time; the *Newsnight* story, indeed, was another ghoulish first in the killer's achievements. And if the watching Ripper were stung by the televised belittlings, they wouldn't exactly spur him into giving himself up on the grounds that he had misassessed his own importance. If they stung him to any action, one guessed, might it not be to the sort of action which had brought him his 'significance' in the first place?

Rock

Mark Kidel

American Dream

Ry Cooder *Apollo Victoria*
Bob Seger *Wembley Arena*

Success in rock, as in so many other spheres of life, has a way of spoiling those who earn it: the demands of stardom, the isolation which it inevitably brings, the appetite of the record companies and the needs of the media and thousands or millions of fans — all add up to a price which sours the seductive appeal of mass popularity. After all, if a particular formula works, why risk losing the undeniable comfort of record sales for the sake of self-expression and discovery?

But the way the record business survives is not quite as simple as that, for there is simultaneously a pressure to change, to surprise record buyers with something new and exciting. Most rock musicians steer an uneasy course between repeating themselves and finding a new sound. Bob Dylan stands out heroically by his refusal to stand still.

There are others, all less famous, who have trodden a parallel path. London was graced in recent weeks by two such American musicians, Ry Cooder and Bob Seger — both of whom have only in the last year or two become successful, after long periods of relative obscurity. Both were well-known to other musicians, critics and a small cult following — in Seger's case a sizeable but local band of supporters in Detroit. It is also clear that Cooder and Seger have benefited from years of uncompromising hard work and dedication — a dedication above all to themselves and the music they believe in. They must have both frequently listened to black radio stations in their teens, because the strength of their music lies in its direct connection with blues, r&b and soul, all of it archetypal loser's music.

Ry Cooder has quietly existed in the shadow of better-known musicians and bands to whom he has consistently given brilliant support as a guitarist: the Rolling Stones, Taj Mahal, Captain Beefheart, Little Feat and Randy Newman. His own, highly idiosyncratic, albums have each explored, with a respect that was as fresh as it was unacademic, various branches of the roots of rock'n'roll: they are all remarkable achievements and hugely enjoyable. Cooder's confident humility came across powerfully when he performed at the Apollo Victoria on his recent British tour: he was the star, and yet allowed each of the excellent musicians he had chosen to play and sing with him as much space as he took himself. There are few guitarists around who can express as much with as few notes: most guitar heroes will indulge in two or three chorus solos, but Cooder put all he had into a few short phrases, uncluttered but full of feeling, technically perfect but never lacking in spontaneity. Bobby King and Willie Green, two black vocalists, one a *basso profundo* and the other superbly skilful at falsetto, provided Cooder with those rich harmonies that black Americans have nurtured in church and incorporated with such power into what they so accurately call 'soul' music. The two of them sang (and danced) with a grace and style that lifted the whole evening very close to perfection.

Cooder's material is drawn from 25 years of popular music history, and he chooses it well: many of the songs are humorous, and many tell a story. All of them are characteristic vignettes from the American Dream — songs about making it (or failing to do so), women and the road. It is the small distance he takes from it all that has always made Cooder's work so exciting, a deep reverence mixed with detachment. Seger, on the other hand, has always written most of his own numbers, although he owes a clear stylistic debt to Chuck Berry, Wilson Pickett and James Brown. His songs have always reflected a very simple pattern, and they fit one of two categories: powerful and unbridled rockers, or softer, medium-tempo numbers that flow rather than boogie. The former are extrovert and joyful, while the latter are introspective, and tinged with sadness and uncertainty. What came across most clearly at Wembley was Seger's honesty, a quality that seems so far to have been unaffected by the three hit albums which he has rather belatedly produced: the song 'Against the Wind', drawn from the album of the same name, expresses unequivocally the mixed feelings with which he has taken on his new role, and on stage, Seger sang and played with a striking lack of pose or image striking; he wore no mask.

During his years of hard and unacclaimed touring around the USA, Seger refused to change his style, the context which he had established with such brilliance on *Smokin O.P's* and *Back in* '72, two outstanding and very raw albums produced in the early 1970s. He has never injected his songs with a flavour of country, reggae or new wave for the sake of passing fashion, and his steadfast dedication to a limited genre has something of a double edge, for such discipline does not thrive in a world where each band must turn out new product every year or so. Seger's music is honest, uncompromising and powerful, but it is impossible to avoid feeling a little bored. The best moments in Seger's Wembley concert were the simple poignancy of 'We've Got Tonite', the steam-roller force of 'He's Strut' and the anger of 'Just a Number'; but there were also times when the sameness dulled the senses.

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Television — 2

Troy Kennedy Martin

Her own Good

Television drama is becoming something of a court of last resort for those who seek to stop the most appalling anomalies which still exist in many of our institutions, anomalies which the institutions themselves recognise but seem incapable of removing. In *Life for Christine*, Granada Television have focussed on the fate which may await those unfortunate children who fall foul of the Children, Young Persons Act 33 Section 53 (2) or the Mental Health Act of 1959. In the name of enlightened social policy these children are 'detained for life' because the law can find no other way to be flexible with regard to their release. And because no institution wants to look after them, they wind up in a maximum security hospital like Rampton or Broadmoor, or even in prisons like Holloway which cannot refuse to accept them.

Here they are subjected to the same brutalising treatment as adults, with the same drugs, strip cells, and institutional violence — for once more than an emotive phrase, when we are shown how four nurses hurl themselves on the struggling kid and stab her with some mind-numbing chemical in order to make her more receptive to the solitary confinement which she is to undergo. This we are to understand took place at Risley, where for seven days prior to her 'trial' Christine was left alone in a padded cell deprived of all sensory experience except food and drugs. It was an environment likely to send a grown man batty, but it is evidently considered legitimate fare for 14-year-olds in this institution.

It was at this 'trial' at which she stood (stood being the right word for her arse was so scarred with needle scabs that she could not sit down) accused of putting a cigarette lighter to the curtains of her previous institution. For this she was given the 'life' sentence, and after a further period in a padded cell at Risley, was carted off for a year's solitary confinement in Holloway and finally to a maximum security hospital where she is to this day.

How can the trauma which would normally afflict any young child hurled into this nightmare environment, with all her manifestations of rage and rebellion, be distinguished by the 'experts' from the pathological state which the nurses consistently ascribe to her behaviour. The very instincts and responses which in any other situation would evoke a commendation for valour are here set forth in a pejorative, psychological jargon — which is itself devoid of any clinical meaningfulness because at no time did the case notes explain her behaviour in the context in which it occurred. This is a Kafkaesque world where any manifestation of rebellion against a cruel and impassive fate is treated as an indictment of mental illness; where even tears are forbidden because they betoken an emotional instability which will result in one more damning report as to why she should not be returned to the outside world.

As the viewer watches this drug-fattened vegetable adapt herself to her institutional role, knowing that the very social values demanded of her by her keepers are those which will render her incapable of looking after herself in the outside world, we begin to question not the probity but the sanity of those responsible for her welfare. It is we are told, for her own good.

The degree of indignation one feels is a measure of the effectiveness of Fay Weldon's script and John Goldschmidt's direction. Resisting the temptation to colour in the background, they have given the production an almost one-note-strident quality which brooks no counter argument. Working very closely from documents and almost imprisoned within their bleak confines, they have produced an indictment of the imprisonment of that child and of the others — 12 at the moment share her fate in England. And in doing so, they have created images of one aspect of our society which are difficult to forget.

Weekend Competition

No 2646 **Set by B. Mooring**

Clerihews, please, describing newspapers, journals and magazines; *The Times* is banned, but anything else is OK from the *Sun* to the *Spectator*, from *Farmers' Weekly* to the *TLS*. Max 10 goes; closing date 22 December.

No 2643 **Set by E.O. Parrott**

Dickens or Shakespeare on the demise of *The Times*.

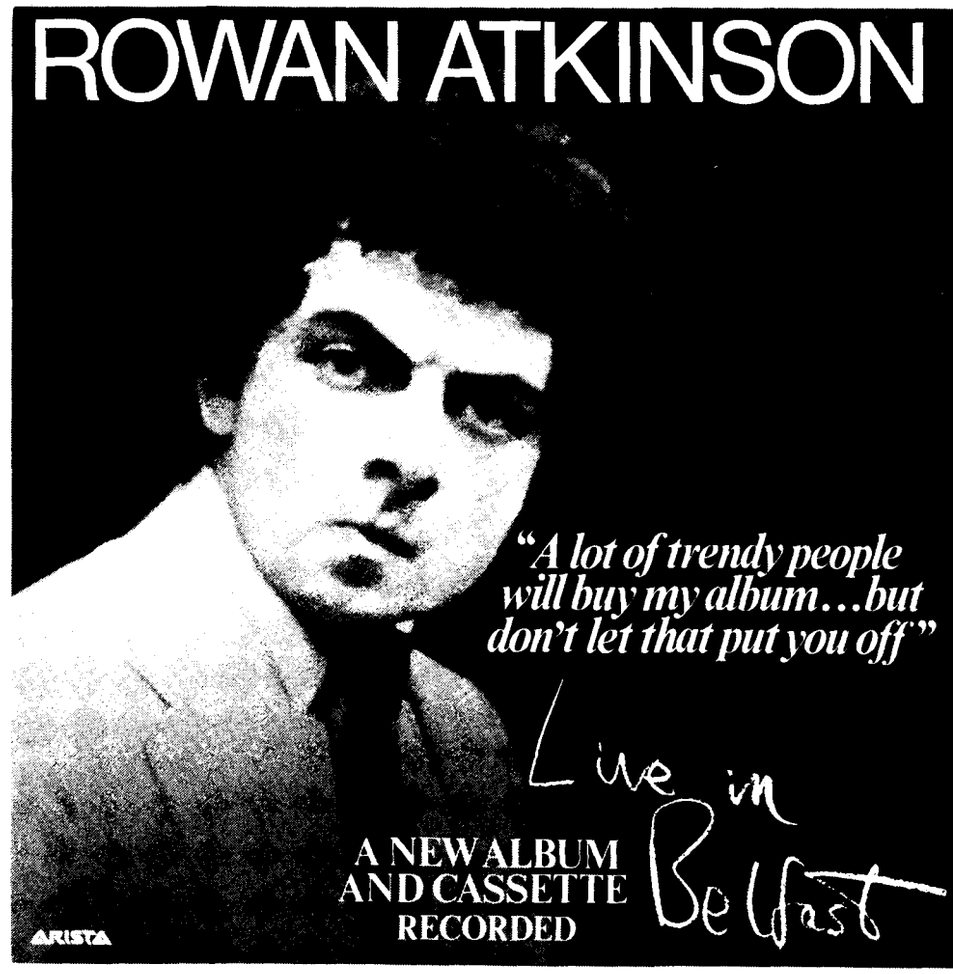
Report **by Ms de Meaner**

A hit, a very palpable hit. Not one entry which was not a pleasure to read. We would like to reward you all but these are hard times, so ten green ones each for the printed entries and the last *DMQ* to Martin Fagg. A severe public reprimand goes to the buffoons in Complex filing subsection B who managed to lose a prizewinner's address. If Chris Ford would care to contact us again, we will make amends ere long.

Shallow: And is old Double-Talk living yet?
Silence: Dead, sir.
Shallow: 'Jesu, Jesu, dead! A penned a stout leader. 'A struck a fine stance. Lord Roy of Fleet, that came from over the great water, loved him well and did squander much gold on him. I mind me how, 42 years ago, when I too stood at the stone, this Double-Talk and I, when the Allemands made great perturbation in the world and crowed it like your very dung-cock, were the sole men with spunk enow to cry foutre to their fulmenings — till all our countrymen, made bold by our example, did pluck up their corages likewise and baste those beer-swill bully-boys. You had not two such swinge-bucklers in all Fetter Lane as us, Master Silence. Jesu, Jesu, the brave days that we have spent!
Silence: We shall not see their like again, cousin.
Shallow: And is old Double-Talk dead?

MARTIN FAGG

Enter Flavio, reading a paper.
Fla: 'Cross swords, South is dummy, so shall I puzzle thee. Ten.' Marry, an I find the whoreson knave who delighteth so to addle men's brains, —
Enter Silvio, reading a paper.
Sil: 'Small earthquake in Illyria. Not many dead.' How now, Flavio.
Fla: Silvio, good morrow. Say, what shall I set down here?
Sil: What letters hast thou?
Fla: Faith, divers letters, from my lord Bishop and others, who speak all of cuckoos.
Sil: What saith Bernardo?
Fla: 'A babbles of German music.
Sil: Aye, this is a knave, who can indite you a paragraph, who can colon you and half colon you,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A NEW ALBUM AND CASSETTE RECORDED
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who can bracket you most parenthetically, till at the end a man cometh out no wiser than he went in. But knowest thou, that this our chief herald and chronicle is to be no more?

Fla: Sayest thou so? Then shall our times be sad, indeed.

If in our Times we can no longer read.

Exeunt.

MICHAEL SWAN

It was the worst of times, it was the last of the Times. A man with cruel glasses ran the paper from Canada and a man with sensible glasses thought he was the editor in England; the great British institution which nobody seemed to read was threatened by problems concerning the great American institution, money . . .

JIM ANTHONY

Tony Miles

Chess

No 208 **September Problems**

The September problems were an Oslo set and a pretty messy lot. The first, **problem 196 (r2qkb1r/pp1b1pp1/4p3/6Qp/5B2/2PB4/P4PPP/R3R1K1)** came from Regan-Cramling and was the one straightforward position. White has the killer blow 1.RxPch! Now if ...PxR, 2.B-N6 is mate and ...B-K2; 2.QxP is obviously crushing, then 1...BxR; 2.B-N5ch, B-Q2; 3.R-K1ch. Here Black tried the desperate 3...Q-K2 but after 4.BxBch, KxB; 5.Q-N5ch, K-B1; 6.Q-KB5ch, Q-K3; 7.RxQ, PxR; 8.Qx Pch, K-Q1; 9.Q-Q5ch, K-K1; 10.B-N5, B-R6; 11.QxP he had to resign. Instead 3...B-K2 is met by 4.B-Q6 and if 4...BxB; 5.RxBch, K-B1; 6.R-Q7ch, or 4...0-0; 5.BxB and (i) 5...Q-N3, 6.BxR; (ii) 5...Q-B2; 6.B-KB6, P-KN3; 7.Q-R6; (iii) 5...Q-K1; 6.BxB, QxB(Q2); 7.B-B6; (iv) 5...R-K1; 6.BxQ, RxRch; 7.B-B1, B-N4; 8.QxB, RxB; 9.QxP winning in all cases.

Problem 197 (R3r1k1/2Qb3p/6q1/1pp5/6p1/6N1/1P1r2PP/5R1K) from Miles-Regan caused some fun. To dispense with the first near miss, 1.R-Q8 seems adequately met by Q-Q3. So 1.RxRch. Now my opponent recaptured with the queen and I won neatly with 2.N-K4! (though not 2.N-R5, R-KB7! with countertricks), QxN; 3.Q-Q8ch, Q-K1; 4.Q-N5ch, Q-N3; 5.QxR and Black resigned, being materially down with his king still fatally exposed. However, after 1...QxR I did not realise how good my position was. Apart from 2.N-K4, 2.Q-B4 wins, eg 2...R-Q5; 3.Q-N5ch (or Q-R6), Q-N3 (...K-R1; 4.QxBP); 4.Q-K7! or 2...R-Q4; 3.N-K4. Even more absurd, I cannot find any defence to R. F. Tindall's *suggestion of 2.QxP with the triple threat of* Q-N5ch, N-K4 and N-R5. If 2...RxQNP, 3.N-R5 and Black is deceased.

So much for 1...QxR. Far more interesting is 1...BxR. First I must plead guilty to blatantly glossing over this in my solution. When setting the position I spent ten minutes looking for a clear refutation and, though I was sure White was winning, I did not find a precise line — so I left that to you! Secondly, a technical point:— I have no objection to communal analysis (which is easily identified in all but trivial positions) but if two or three people send in essentially the same work then it would clearly be unfair to other competitors to treat each as an individual entry and I do adjust prizes accordingly. Anyway, this time team work didn't work. Two of the entrants in question produced the line (1.RxRch, BxR) 2.Q-K7, B-B2; 3.R-R1 with the serious threat of R-R8ch. Now ...Q-QB3 drops a rook to Q-N5ch, ...B-Q4 is mated by Q-Q8ch, ...B-K1 fails to N-K4, and on ...RxQNP comes 4.R-R8ch, K—N2; 5.Q-B8ch, K-B3; 6.R-R6ch, K-K4; 7.QxPch, B-Q4; 8.Q-B3ch winning. However, the third member of the consortium put in some overtime and discovered the fine defence 3...R-QB7! One point is to defend the BP, the second is that after 4.R-R8ch, K-N2; 3. Q-B8ch. K-B3; 4.R-R6ch (Q—R8ch, K-N4 is nothing) K-K4; 5.Q-R8ch, K-Q4! The back rank threat keeps Black alive. The only entry in which I failed to find a hole came from J. D. Taylor: 2.Q-B4, Q-Q3; 3.QxPch (3.Q-N5ch, B-N3! 4.N-K4, R-Q8! is insufficient), Q-N3 (...B -N3; 4.N-K4, R-Q5; 5.Q-B8ch, Q-Q1; 6.Q-K6ch, K-N2; 7.Q-K5ch, K-R3; 8.NxP with N-K6 to follow); 4.Q-B3! B-B2 (if ...Q-N2; 5.N-B5, Q-B1; 6.Q-B4! wins, or ...P-R4; 5.Q-B8ch, K-R2; 6.Q-K7ch, K-R3; 7.Q-K3ch, Q-N4; 8.R-B6ch (or QxQch), B-N3; 9.N-B5ch mating); 5.N-B5 (with threats of Q-R8ch, N-K7ch and N-R6ch), R-Q2 (the best try); 6.Q-R8ch, B-K1; 7.Q-K4! Q-R4 (how else to stop N-K2ch?) 8.Q-K6ch, K-R1; 9.Q-B6ch winning! I must say I'm rather glad that Regan played 1...QxR.

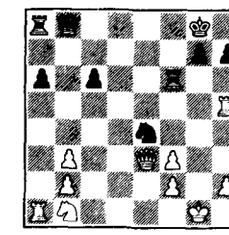
Problem 198 (5k2/p3rq1p/R3p3/6Qp/8/6P1/P4PK1) came from Miles-de Firmian. I played 1.R-R3! (1.R-B6 is clearly weaker. After, say, ...R-K1 there is nothing decisive.) Q-N3. (This is, in my opinion, *the most obvious sensible defence since* ...K-K1 loses trivially to Q-N5ch — some credit for this though — and on ...Q-N2; 2.QxP White's massive positional plus should win. Perhaps ...Q-K1 is the best try but it is far from obvious.) Here the game was adjourned but when I pointed out 2.Q-B5! Black resigned since there is no answer to the threats of R-B3ch and RxRP viz. 2...Q-K5ch; 3.R-B3ch, K-K1; 4.Q-B8mate; 2...K-K1; 3. Q-B8ch, K-B2; 4.R-B3ch, K-N2; 5.Q-B8 mate; 2...Q-N2; 3.R-B3ch, K-N1; 4.Q-B8ch, or 2...Q-K1; 3.RxP.

Problem 199 (N4b1r/pk2pppp/8/3n4/1P2pB2/R2b4/5PPP/2R3K1) came from Mariotti-Miles. Unfortunately the gremlins got at my introduction. The relevant piece should have read 'How should black continue? How should Black not continue? (plausible lines only)' Somehow the second question disappeared. Luckily quite a lot of solvers found how Black should not continue! 1.B(Q2)-B4 is desperation since White is lost anyway. The N will fall and Black will have an overwhelming material plus. Obviously Black should avoid 1...NxB; 2.R-B7ch, KxN; 3.R(3)xPch drawing. Credit though for 1...KxN which, although messy, should win. The point I, or rather Mariotti, was fishing for, was that Black appears to have a trivial win with 1...P-K4; 2.BxP, BxP completing his development with a winning position. Fool that I am, I played 1...P-K4?? *only to be stunned by* 2.R-R5!! The N on Q4 is undermined and then there is no way to keep the WRs from the 7th rank. The game concluded 2...NxB; 3.R-B7ch; 4.KxN; 4.R(5)xPch draw. Had I sat on my hands for a while I should have realised two things: first that the N(Q4) is the cornerstone of my position and second (psychologically hard to realise over the board) that 1.,B-B4 does absolutely nothing! (2.N-B7 will be met by NxB) Hence Black should simply play 1...P-K3! supporting the N, winning the QNP and a piece, when White can safely resign.

Prizes: Messrs Tindall and Garfath £15 each, Ghate and Taylor £8 each and Cornforth £4.

Problem 208

Black to play. How should the game go? Answers to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked no later than 17 December



Solution to problem 206

1.QxPch!! K-B1; 2.K-N1!! PxQ; 3.RxR, R-N1! 4.R-B7, Q-B3; 5.R(Q)-Q7, K-K1; 6.R-B6! Q-R1; 7.R-QN7, K-Q1; 8.R-N8ch drawing. If 2 . . . QxP; 3.Q-B6ch, K-K1; 4.R-K5ch! or 1 . . . K-Q1; 2.QxPch.

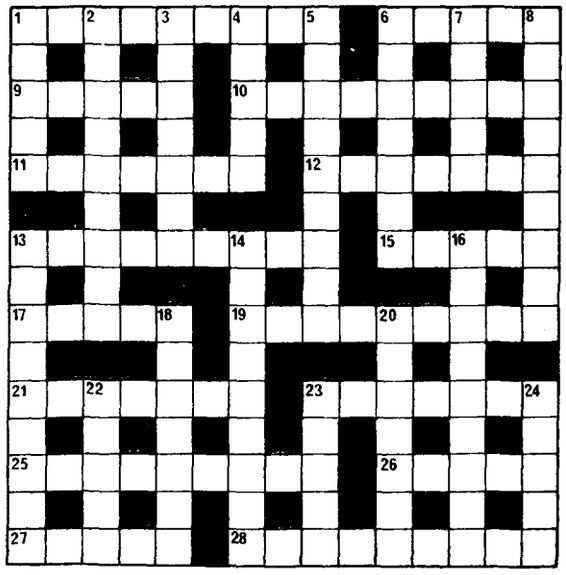
We apologise for the unrecognisable solution that appeared last week. It should have read

Solution to problem 205

1.NxP! PxN; 2.R-N3! (threatening QxP; not, however, 2.QxP? N-B7ch!) QR1 (or Q-N2, P-R3); 3.Q-N5ch, K-R2; 4.QxPch, N-R3; R-N6! Resigns.

Weekend Crossword 1365

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1365, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 16 December.



ACROSS

1 Hack prose churned out by a drudge (9)
6 Opening for a man with a million (5)
9 Book without article or make cancellation (5)
10 This is uplifting and may make the evil atone (9)
11 Office which makes me look back in anger (7)
12 Game preserve as expression of gratitude (7)
13 The weaknesses of following train connections (9)
15 Means of catching a girl with a ring (5)
17 There would be some excuse if you gave no backing to these districts (5)
19 Fool in company with cautious bird (9)
21 Spell of peace hoped for after politicians' talk? (7)
23 Go beyond an insect in a heraldic position (7)
25 Is holding a party afterwards for worshippers (9)
26 Eastern light providing a message for all (5)
27 Girl who is among the angels I embrace (5)
28 Crossed with a line in unfinished business (9)

DOWN

1 River race (5)
2 Honest at first, he ceases to be this after his return (9)
3 Receptacle in which seniors enter college (7)
4 Magistrate concerned with first offender (5)
5 Military manoeuvres or schoolboy tasks (9)
6 Waterway in which I am missing from the 9.50 after tea (7)
7 With Diana this group of stars make records (5)
8 It is compulsory to give a chap time to go round a mountain (9)
13 Citizens' right of males in foreign country (9)
14 Beginning with one nice pint spoilt (9)
16 Sailors a long way off among wise men (9)
18 Part of water for aquatic sports champion? (7)
20 'Sailing on ——— wings athwart the noon' (Coleridge) (7)
22 Retreats where agreements are not reached? (5)
23 Without relative the title would become dust (5)
24 Played, and you are held by backward point (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1364

S	H	A	R	P	■	E	M	P	R	E	S	S
H	■	T	■	R	C	E	■	X	C	■	T	■
A	S	T	R	A	K	H	A	N	■	C	A	R	G	O
M	■	I	■	C	■	O	■	N	■	E	■	A	■	I
R	E	C	I	T	E	■	C	Y	C	L	O	P	I	C
O	■	■	I	■	D	■	B	■	S	■	P	■	■	■
C	H	I	N	C	H	I	L	L	A	■	L	I	S	P
K	■	N	■	E	■	S	■	A	■	T	■	E	■	A
S	A	C	K	■	S	T	O	C	K	Y	A	R	D	S
■	■	U	■	B	■	I	■	K	■	P	■	■	■	T
M	A	R	C	E	L	L	O	■	C	H	I	L	L	I
U	■	I	■	T	■	L	■	M	■	O	■	I	■	C
S	P	O	R	T	■	A	Y	A	T	O	L	L	A	H
E	■	U	■	E	■	T	■	S	■	N	■	A	■	E
D	E	S	E	R	T	E	R	S	■	S	O	C	K	S

Prize winners to No 1364

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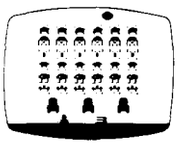

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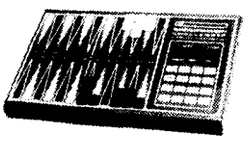

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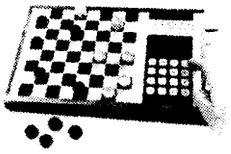

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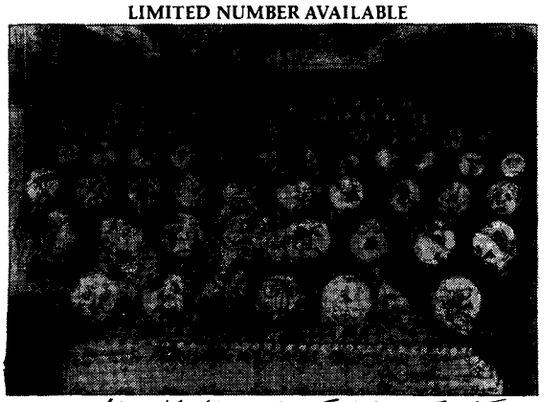

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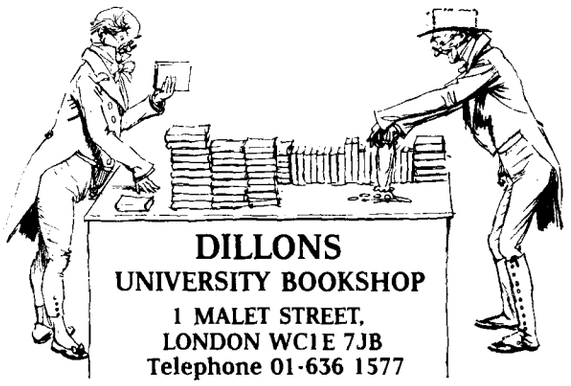

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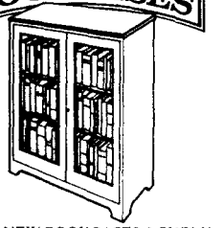

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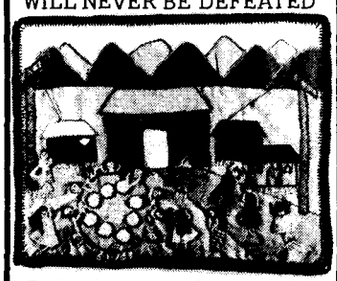

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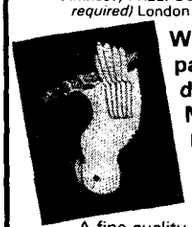

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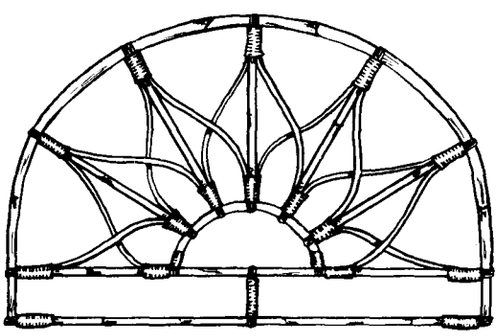

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